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AGNES DE MANSFELDT

A HISTORICAL TALE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND," "THE HEIRESS OF
BRUGES," "HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS," &c. &c. &c.

"Manifold matters of recreation, policie, love adventures, &c., abundantlie
administered; and all in the golden reigne of blessed Queen Elizabeth, the sweete
floure of amiable virginitie."—*Epistle to Stow's Chronicles.*

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AGNES DE MANSFELDT.

CHAPTER I.

AND scarcely had the day-god rushed up impetuously from the horizon, when the whole face of earth and heaven became changed. Rolling clouds followed fast, and enviously obscured the sunbeams. Torrents of rain poured down. The wind shook to their very roots the young-leaved trees, and lashed the waters of the Rhine into the semblance of a mimic sea. A flood swept through each separate street of the city, and sheets of water fell from the projecting roofs and angular gables of every house. Yet the drenched citizens were up and out in thousands. They

had a double vengeance to exercise on this most inauspicious day; for both religious and political fanaticism worked fiercely in their hearts.

The *fête* of St. Urbain, the patron of vine-growers and wine-drinkers, had been affected by the caprices of the season, in a very peculiar manner throughout Germany from time immemorial. No bishop or martyr was ever canonized under such contingencies. St. Swinthin himself, the very arbiter of the weather-glass, the ever-changing distributor of shower or sunshine, possessed immunities which were refused to the innocent and ill-treated Urbain. No matter if hail, rain, snow, or a combination of all defaced the anniversary of the former, his faithful followers do him equal honour as though he had benignantly shut up his sluices and poured enjoyment instead of misery upon the nether world. But if on the birthday of the latter, who was never imagined to possess the slightest control over the elements, the

weather proved unpropitious to his pleasure-seeking votaries, there was no manner of indignity which they did not heap upon him, his effigies, his relics, and his memory. For four-and-twenty hours together he was completely unsainted and decanonized, and a long twelve-month of veneration cancelled the sacrilege of a day. It was a curious custom; a grotesquely practical satire on the monstrosity of saints'-worship. It is wonderful that such a principle could live through the anomaly of such a practice. But the church of Rome owed its great strength to the greater weakness of human nature; and it played the conscience and superstitions of its adherents, with a long, a loose, but a scarcely-to-be-broken line.

The desperate weather which ushered in the morning would perhaps have proved a check to the long-planned revolt, had it not been that the pent-up impiety of the populace was glad to find a double vent on this occasion; and it turned out that the day was well fixed on by

the corporation conspirators. No sooner, therefore, were the citizens informed by the authorities that they were at liberty to pursue their usual career of outrage, than the flood-gates of popular fury were let loose, and at a preconcerted signal the demonstrations of hostility against the insulted saint were in a moment turned into deeds of violence against the denounced sovereign. The wooden statue of poor Urbain which stood in the market-place was quickly covered with showers of mud, and ere long hurled from its pedestal and dragged through the abounding puddles of that, even now, dirtiest town in Europe. And be it remembered that the filthy water of Cologne at that epoch was not neutralized as now by the *eau* of more modern invention. No Farina existed then, to redeem the noxious celebrity of his native place; and the impurities of thousands of monks and mendicants aided to give any odours but those of sanctity to the defaced and draggled effigy.

And it was before the irreverent rage of the congregated mass of rioters was sated, yet just as it had reached the point of readiness for some new object, that the skilful revolutionists intermixed the cry of "Down with the elector!" with the vociferated execrations poured out on all sides against the saint. In an instant the tide of rabble excitement rushed fiercely into this new channel. The image of Urbain was abandoned to its filthy fate. Its vulgar assailants, in every sense profane, had now found a higher object of attack, and they tumultuously rushed in broken groups towards every quarter of the city, where any statues, busts, or insignia of Ghebbard Truchses were to be found. These they dragged along the various streets, and after mutilating them in every possible form of indignity and indecency, they either spurned them out of the city-gates, or dashed them into the waves of the angry river, and they shouted with frantic joy as each fragment was whirled within the foaming eddies.

One party, more furious than the rest, and hurried away by their hatred against the individual so far as to confound him with the office he filled, burst into the cathedral, and seizing the archbishop's sceptre, or baculus, from the place where it had been suspended for a long series of years among other consecrated objects, soon shivered it to pieces in the public street, in the presence and amidst the loud plaudits of thousands, who quickly commenced a scramble in the accumulated mud for the rich gold-work and the precious stones that had ornamented the sacred bauble, and which were now scattered among the crowd. The taste for pillage thus given, there is no knowing how far it might have been carried, or if it had even stopped with the plunder of the holy temple itself, had not the magistrates and city-officers, with the members of the council, and even the solemn syndic, appeared at this critical juncture, and by the force of sundry harangues and inflammatory appeals to the pre-

judices of the mob, so far mastered their passions as to turn them from the objects they wished to save against those they hoped to destroy. The electoral palace was consequently the point towards which the pillagers next moved.

The first stragglers, on arriving before the principal gates, were surprised to find them wide open and unguarded; and others who went round to the rear observed similar proofs that the building was totally abandoned. Such was indeed the fact; and the rebel magistracy with their followers found, consequently, no obstacle to the fierce rush which was instantly made into the court-yard, halls, corridors, and thence into the most secret chambers. The work of destruction soon commenced and was speedily over. It must be witnessed to be believed in what an incredibly short space of time an extensive mansion may be sacked and gutted from garret to cellar. In the case we describe no time was lost; nothing was spared.

The ancient but costly furniture, pictures, books, ornaments, and utensils of all kinds were shattered in the various apartments, or dashed down from the windows or balconies into the street. The fragments of shivered glass shone for months among the pavement in glittering testimony of the devastation, long after the minutest splinters of wood work had crumbled or been blown away, and while the winds whistled through the doorless and windowless shell of desolation that looked like a ruin many ages old.

The spoils of the palace, variously applied, soon gave an air of wild and fantastic picturesqueness to the pillagers. The tapestries and the costly curtains of silk or velvet, deeply fringed with gold or silver lace, were torn into shreds and affixed to poles and carried as flags waving over the heads of their bearers, or turned into scarfs, sashes, or imperfect mantles to decorate their bodies. Dresses of every description, from those of the prince-prelate and

his richly-attired guest Count Scotus down to the simplest menials of the household, were instantly appropriated by the first comers. Pieces of armour, helmets, and warlike instruments were donned and wielded in most incongruous ways. And thus equipped and decorated, half-drunk with the produce of the well-stored cellars, and ripe for every excess, the destroyers next proceeded to the houses of Kriechlingen and the other protestant members of the chapter, and at each of these the same scene was repeated, with slight variations of violence. In none of those obnoxious mansions however were any human victims found on which the mob might wreak their fury. There never was a more bloodless revolution effected, for early in the morning it was announced that the elector and his suite, with the families of Kriechlingen and the others of those who adhered to his cause had all effected their escape towards Bonn, the capital of the electorate. And the gate leading to that city being in pos-

session of the troops under the command of Von Heyen, to whom were joined some of the Liegnitz reitres, the people, sure of their triumph, did not attempt any collision with the united regular and irregular force, which after a short delay followed the distinguished run-aways whose retreat it was their duty to protect, showing a good countenance against the mob who felt no inclination to push their conquests beyond the city walls.

As long as the electoral troops were in sight, the memory of Von Heyen's conduct a few weeks before, and the reputation of the reitres acting as assistant checks, the ardour of the revolted population was considerably tempered by alarm. Their worshipful honours of the town council, baffled in the hope of seizing the elector and his partizans, terrified at the very absence of resistance which seemed to speak some deep design or after-plot, and above all things marvelling at the disappearance of their beloved Bishop of Liege, were tossed to and

fro in a tumult of doubt and fear. To the timid there is no evil so great as the vague apprehension of treachery. The brave man holds it in especial scorn. However he may be alive to a sense of other danger—even when he rushes to meet them—*that* he rarely dreams of, and never dreads. But our palpitating friends of the corporation were not of the latter class; and it was only on receiving a report of the actual retreat of Von Heyen and his force that the self-formed provisional government put forth all the insolence of brief authority.

A formal proclamation of Ghebhard Truchses' dethronement, and of Ernest's election was the first act of the citizens and of the churchmen whom they associated with them in the government. The various representatives of the emperor, the pope, and the other potentates, were invited to sanction these proceedings; and the rest of the electorate was strongly urged, in ready-printed addresses, to join in the movement. Order was soon in a great degree re-

stored. The burghers when they saw that there was no chance of a conflict assembled in great numbers for the formation of a civic guard; the rioters worn out by fatigue, drenched with rain, and overpowered by wine, retired to their hovels for repose, or found it on the pavement or in the channels where they sunk down in promiscuous heaps. In this state, the various weapons which they had plundered from the palace and elsewhere, were quietly taken from the relaxing grasp of some, or purchased from the more tenacious few at low prices. Several who resisted the summons of the authorities were put into prison. Others scattered voluntarily into the country; and thus in four-and-twenty hours the city was at least secure against any abuse of the liberty it had at so little risk acquired.

But during the whole of this period, anxiety and apprehension on the subject of the missing Bishop of Liege absorbed every other feeling; and while the revolted citizens dared not take a

step in advance of what the first hour of success had urged them to, the wily diplomatists of the congress hung back from any decided measure of approbation as to what had been already done. Serious misgivings were the consequence to the compromised members of the corporation. Many a shivering fit of moral ague was followed by the fever-flush of terror at imagined pains and penalties; and the most valorous among the burgher conservatives found their draught of triumph as bitter as though it had been literally distilled from their laurels. An end was, however, put to this suspense by the chance discovery of the bishop in his closet-prison. An unsated pillager had returned to the ruined palace on the morning following the riot, in hopes of finding in some nook or cranny where-withal to reward his avaricious perseverance; and he succeeded far beyond his hopes or deserts. For in groping against the wall of the apartment so lately occupied by Scotus, he touched, by chance, the spring-lock which fast-

ened the newly-proclaimed elector in the very heart of his usurped possession. Great was the delight on either side, when the liberator and the delivered knew the real state of things. The incarcerated bishop was, however, nearly exhausted by his long confinement and his cramped position. Not having heard the slightest buzz or hum in the direction of what Scotus had assured him was the private chamber of Ghebbhard Truchses (as well he might not, considering that the partition-wall was full three feet thick), his faculty of overcaution prevented him from venturing the slightest sound that might betray him, to the ears which he doubted not were on the alert for any symptom of his near neighbourhood. When the pillage of the palace commenced, his organ of "caution" had become suddenly developed many fold; and even when the stillness of abandonment set in, and the common sensation of nature told him that night had succeeded to day, and that day was again treading on the footsteps of night, he

defied all the urgency of sleep, hunger, and thirst, and remained stiff and half-starved without uttering a cry or striking a blow that might by possibility have attracted the attention of some passer-by. And he would, in all probability but for his chance release, have ended by sinking dead in his cell sooner than brave the peril of a call for relief. And of such stuff is made your over-prudent men, all unfit, it will be at least allowed, to guide, even if they be qualified at all to mix in, the great movements of political life.

We must pass over the rejoicings of the bishop and his newly-acquired subjects at this miraculous release, as well as the vigorous measures which he immediately adopted in his several relations with the corporation and the congress, and the secret glee with which he chuckled over the thought that Scotus was by that time in close durance at Liege, and within reach of the ample measure of retribution due to his double treachery. And now we turn our

attention to persons and events of more interests.

It needs hardly to be stated that Von Sweinishen was the source from which the elector learned the dangers that beset him and his friends, and by whose timely warning he and they were enabled to escape from it. The rough but cunning adventurer having apparently entered into all the proposals of Scotus, accepted all his bribes, and, on his return to the town council, made a commutation of his demands in consideration of prompt payment, hastened with his master to communicate everything that passed to Ghebhard Truchses.

The state of mind of Ghebhard, from the moment of his recovered recollection after the shock of amaze and rapture on seeing what he believed to be the magical representation of his heart's idol in the mirror, must be left to the reader's fancy. To depict it in broad and deep detail is beyond the writer's hopes; and a skeleton sketch of such an intense combination

of feeling and thought would be unworthy of our hero, and of his history. How, in fact, describe, or how account for, the mental miracle of a man's bounding at once from inebriate unconsciousness into the full enjoyment of reason, and at the same time sinking into entire forgetfulness of what passed during his temporary loss of it? How analyze that confused buzzing of the brain, which tells us vaguely what we said, and heard, and saw, and thought when wine was just beginning to gain the mastery, and ere the nobler faculties of the mind became entirely swamped in its excess? Or the rush of blood, the wild pulse-throbs, the heart riot, under the false influence of which a mortal feels himself a God, while he is, in fact, no better than a brute? The burst of returning consciousness, the pang of regret, the blush of shame, the deep-breathed vow—so often made, so seldom kept—of future moderation? And if to these general features of a too common case be added the peculiar sensation, likely to

arise in a mind of haughty sensitiveness, far in advance of the gross excesses of that age yet in full sympathy with its impassioned energy, materials will not be wanting for the speculative reader, who would picture Ghebbard Truchses in the most critical morning of his life.

And when, led in by Scotus, and by him prepared for the scene, he saw assembled together Agnes, her brothers, and her friend Duchess Anne, all unanimous in consenting to, and the three latter eager for the completion of that marriage which the elector now urged with such seductive ardour, when, not inquiring how this group was formed or brought so strangely into his palace, he only saw it as the condensed personification of feelings of which Agnes was the heart; when, forgetting the struggle which had for awhile so racked him, he was resolved to sacrifice all interests and brave all hostility for the possession of the bliss which Providence seemed to have provided and secured for him; then it was that he presented

a living model which bids defiance to aught but imagination's boundless skill.

No sooner was Ghebhard convinced of the reality of his own sensations, and satisfied that he did not breathe in a mist of magical delusion, and all around him proving the fact that his passion for Agnes now only waited the words which were to make its solemnization legal, as its existence was already holy, than he sent prompt messengers to summon Nuenar, Kriechlingen, and the other leaders among the protestant members of the chapter, to witness the ceremony, to the immediate performance of which Agnes could not refuse the so much urged consent; and, in accordance with her strong-felt wish, as well as to gratify the family-feeling of her brothers, old Cyriacus Spangenberg was chosen as the officiating clergyman, and sent for, for the purpose. It was just when matters had reached this point that Scotus disappeared, and hastened to his rendezvous with the Bishop of Liege, afterwards to accompany

him to the secret council already described. And scarcely had the elector's friends assembled in obedience to his invitation, and before the marriage ceremony could begin, when Prince Henry of Liegnitz and Von Sweinishen demanded instant admission to Truchses' presence, and revealed to him his imminent peril from the plot on the point of bursting out.

Not a moment was to be lost. Immediate action followed on the conviction of its necessity. Truchses again on this occasion gave proof of that inestimable talent which enables a man to place under control his most intense sensations, when their indulgence would clash with matters of equal moment, but of a widely distinct nature. Orders and preparations for departure, a quick perception of the measures to be taken, of what was required for safety and of what would be superfluous, and of the things to be carried away and the encumbrances to be left behind, and finally an instant adaptation of tone and manner to every individual involved in the

exigency—encouragement here, repression there, inspiring words and looks to one, a soothing sentence or stimulating phrase to another—all well-timed and fitly applied, and all establishing our hero as a practical man of business, without being which the finest attributes of genius are of small account to those who fill the leading parts in a political drama.

During the whole of this bustling scene our hero's double character was admirably preserved. The sovereign was brought out in full relief; the lover was in abeyance. But the prominent action of the first did not overwhelm the by-play of the latter. A look, a gesture, a passing word told Agnes that she was the inspiration of all the rest. Had anything been required to confirm her attachment the events of that hour had done it, for nothing so cements a woman's affection as her pride in the talents and energy of its object. A gentle, tame, insidious suitor may steal into a female heart, but it is a firm and vigorous one

who can alone keep possession of a woman's mind.

Ere the revolt broke out, the refugees were half-way on the road to Bonn; and in due time, and without any accident or hindrance, they were at the gates of that capital of the electorate and chief residence of the sovereign.

CHAPTER II.

GREAT was the astonishment and regret of Ghebhard Truchses, as he arrived within gunshot of his capital, to find, that instead of widely-opened portals, raised draw-bridges, and shouting thousands, rejoicing in his safe return, nothing was seen but closed barriers, threatening cannon, and a display of civil and military authority, arrayed for parley and discussion. Whether it was that the intrigues of Ernest of Bavaria, and his supporter, were successful, or that the apprehension excited in the magistrates and city senate of Bonn, on this sudden and dubious return of their sovereign, with a large body of armed men under the chief command

of so notorious an adventurer as Henry of Liegnitz, history does not precisely specify. But the whole of these circumstances proves beyond a doubt that let the brilliant or the generous qualities of Truchses have been ever so effective with his intimate associates, or the poorer objects of his bounty, he excited only envy, jealousy, and probably hatred among the leading personages in his two principal cities.

The summons of the officer in command of the body-guard, and in advance of the carriages, that free entrance should be given to his highness the elector, into his own capital, was after considerable parley with Doctor Eccias, the mayor, who was sent for in all haste, answered by a respectful but peremptory request for information as to the number of troops (and the nature of their service) by whom his highness was so unwontedly escorted. The reply of Truchses was a haughty refusal to enter into any details, and a reiterated order, that the

gates should be instantly thrown open, and the keys sent to him for his future safe-keeping. A long time elapsed before any rejoinder came to this demand ; but at length a formal writing, signed and sealed by Doctor Éccias in the name of the senate, and embodying the spirit of the former verbal message, was handed to the elector, who had alighted from his carriage with Agnes, the duchess, Freda, Emma, their mother, and the male members of his immediate party, and taken refuge in a large house of public entertainment, but one most unsuitable for the reception of such a company. The elector's mortification and resentment may be well conceived at this dishonouring sequel to the disgraceful necessity of his flight from Cologne. Had such events occurred some weeks before, there would have been no bounds to his anger, and he would at all hazards have rushed into measures of violent revenge. But under the new influence which possessed him, the heat of his character was tempered down

into warmth, and its irritability into firmness. He glowed, but did not burn;—he was bold, but not rash. His vanity was deeply hurt at appearing to Agnes in the present aspect of defied and shorn authority, but his pride urged him to show her that he was invested with the before unfelt capacity of braving and battling with reverse, now felt for the first time.

It was thus that love formed the foundation of the new character which began to meet those new circumstances, under which he had most probably been confounded and crushed, had not that sublimely regenerating passion taken possession of his soul.

While the elector, with much self-command, perused the written conditions on which the senate insisted before they could suffer him to enter the city, the arrival of Captain Von Heyen with the rear-guards was reported to him.

“ Von Heyen ! yes—he is the man for this crisis,” said Truchses, “ let him attend, and instantly !” and as the captain entered in prompt

obedience to the call, he continued—"you have no doubt heard of what has passed? Well, (as Von Heyen bowed affirmatively) read this, and tell me what answer you think it deserves."

The young soldier glanced at the paper, and clapped his hand on his sword-hilt.

"Good! The reply I looked for; said Truchses—"Go then, Von Heyen, to those refractory senators and bring them to reason. You bear my full warrant on your finger joint—they know the signet ring, and will not doubt the wearer's authority."

Von Heyen paused, as if requiring some more ample instructions.

"What do you wait for?" asked Truchses.

"To learn the direct purpose of your highness's wishes."

"To have the city-gates immediately opened, and the chief magistrate in person to wait on me here. Is that enough? Do you comprehend me fully?"

“ I do, your highness—and I promise you that the mayor shall be here within half an hour, or my corpse be stretched in the senate-house.”

The intrepid messenger found no obstruction on his way into the city, being accompanied from the gates by the two magistrates who bore the proposition of the senate, and who recognized, as ample credentials, the ring which Von Heyen indignantly thrust up before them. He was within a few minutes in the hall where the sapient body was assembled. Rich tapestry hung from the walls of this chamber, and the decorations were all in keeping. The learned chief magistrate, and two associate burgo-masters, in white and scarlet mantles, with the town commander, in military costume, occupied seats on a platform three or four feet above the floor, where a dozen or more of the civic council, in black robes, were placed round a table covered with papers; and twenty-four halberdiers stood at some distance at either side. On the ap-

proach of Von Heyen, formally announced and ushered in as the elector's messenger, the mayor and burgomaster descended two steps from their place of dignity, to do honour to this representative of the sovereign. They then returned to their seats ; a chair was offered to Von Heyen, of which however he did not avail himself ; and at a signal the guards retired with the military commandant.

“ Now, sir captain, we are now ready to hear the gracious message of our sovereign lord, his highness the elector-archbishop,” said Eccias, in grave and pedantic tones.

“ That, master mayor, is a very short and pithy one. His highness orders you to give me the keys of the Cologne gate, and to follow me instantly to his august presence in the faubourg, where he is now detained by the insolent refusal for his admission into the city.”

At these rude words, and the uncompromising air of the speaker, the worshipful sena-

tors looked very ill at ease, and every eye was turned towards the short spare figure and pinched features of the chief magistrate, the representative of their rights and dignity. He met this silent and simultaneous appeal with due decorum ; and after listening to a few hurried observations in either ear from his colleagues who sat beside him, he hummed and hawed, and folded his robes gracefully, and with the air and emphasis of a lecturing professor, he began a reply to the impatient messenger, pointing to the table as he spoke.

“ Sir captain, there lies the charter of our city rights, beside it the keys of our gates, and I am the representative of the one—the guardian of the other”—

“ Good !” cried Von Heyen, interrupting the oration, and sadly discomposing the orator and the audience, not only by the loudness of his voice, but by the accompanying sound occasioned by his fiercely striking the point of his rapier’s scabbard against the floor.

“ Never, therefore, can I compromise those rights, or suffer the sacred trust reposed in me to be violated. I am bound in honour and in duty to refuse his highness’s demand, until his escort is reduced to the true constitutional standard of his accustomed body-guard—and consequently, in the name—”

While Eccias spoke, Von Heyen eyed attentively the many ponderous keys ranged on the table, and to each of which was appended a label with the name of the particular gate engraved on it. He fixed on one bearing the word Cologne, and (ere the chief magistrate could finish the phrase so pompously commenced) he made a rapid stride from where he stood, and having first hooked up his rapier close to his bayderole, he snatched up the key and stuck it into his belt, from which at the same moment he drew forth a long poinard; and then springing on the platform, he grasped the astonished mayor by his mantle close to the throat, and with the vigour of youth

and resolution, he dragged him down upon the floor.

A prodigious tumult arose from this daring act. The burgomasters and senators bounded from their seats, exclaimed loudly, cried out lustily for the guard, ran in every direction about the room, jostling each other and tripping up their own heels in their robes of state. But not one attempted to interpose between the desperate violator of senatorial dignity, and the half-strangled prisoner whom he whisked away towards the door. The halberdiers, however, rushed in, and a dozen blades were in as many seconds ready to immolate the offender, had he not placed his back against the door which some of the party succeeded in locking; and then, in a voice which outroared the exclamations of the rest, fixing at the same time his poinard at his prisoner's breast, he swore that the moment of his death, should be also that of the mayor. He at the same time adroitly loosened without weakening his grasp, so as to

permit the terrified magistrate to plead his own cause with his friends and guardians. Relieved from the dread of strangulation, he lost not a moment in making use of his recovered breath, and he pitifully implored the halberdiers to ground their arms, nor venture to do a mischief to the honourable officer, his highness's confidential messenger—the point of whose blade was still within a hair's breadth of his panting bosom, and whose eye looked daggers to the full as threatening. A burst of attempted explanation, confusion of voices, propositions, menaces, intreaties, all fell together on the unmoved Von Heyen, who declared, briefly but decidedly, again and again, that he would never let go his possession of the key, or his hold on the mayor till he led the one into the presence, and laid the other at the feet of the elector. Further struggling or arguing was evidently in vain, and the most earnest abettor of the sturdy soldier's decision was the captured functionary,

who would have made any terms to put an end to his fearful situation.

And so the affair was arranged, according to Von Heyen's peremptory conditions. He, still holding fast Doctor Eccias (who was preceded by his colleagues in the magistracy, Rudolf Krantz and Jacob Schlaun) marched forthwith out from the senate-house towards the unworthy quarters where the elector was waiting, unattended by any guard, and offering to the gaze of the agitated citizens who crowded the streets, a spectacle which none could by any means comprehend. No sooner had the group reached the gates than Eccias, under his captor's directions, gave orders that the elector's advanced guard should be immediately invited to enter, and take possession of the post. This was with alacrity performed by Von Sweinishen and his reitres; while Von Heyen lost no time in conducting the magistrates into the elector's presence. Once there he let loose the somewhat re-assured mayor, and at the same instant he

deposed the ponderous key on the table before which his sovereign was seated, and he then with a respectful bow, retired.

Doctor Eccias forthwith attempted to stammer out an oration full of explanation and apology, slightly tinged with remonstrance, but rendered almost unintelligible from the speaker's nervous tribulation. Truchses, however, soon set him and his companions at ease, by assurances of his perfect confidence in their fidelity and respect, and of his conviction that the strange and suspicious measures of precaution which so astonished, and at first offended him, had proceeded solely from the senate having mistaken himself and his troops for enemies. He thereupon held out his hand to the trio, who one and all embraced it, with professions of the most profound attachment, and they soon hastened off to communicate the result of their forced audience to their fellow-citizens, and to prepare for the mid-day dinner at the palace to which the elector had given them a most

gracious invitation. Truchses, on their departure, summoned Von Heyen to appear, and after hearing his recital of the scene in the senate house, at which he laughed heartily, he told him, in the presence of his other adherents, that he was from that hour advanced another grade in the army, and that in honour of his conduct, he was also nominated to a situation in the household, so that he should henceforward bear the title of chamberlain and wear the key, his badge of office, as one the best suited to commemorate the service he had that day performed.

In a little more the elector with his party made a triumphal procession through the city to the palace; and he was there received by his brother Charles Truchses, who had most opportunely arrived at the same time at Bonn by another entrance, with a reinforcement of a thousand men, which added to Ghebhard's troops, formed a body quite sufficient to overcome any disaffection to be apprehended from

the senate or the citizens. The strongest measures of precaution were immediately adopted. All the military posts were doubled ; the Liegnitz reitres were placed in a barrack close to the senate-house, and ready to act, on the shortest notice and in the most vigorous manner which might be required, against that sacred building and its suspected occupants. Prince Henry despatched some of his captains to gather up in all haste his scattered levies ; and a considerable increase was made to the usual guard attached to the elector's person, the whole being placed under the immediate command of Major Von Heyen. By these means the burgher discontent was completely held in check ; the hostility of the senate and the magistrates confined to secret plots and murmured menaces ; while both court and city, sovereign and subjects, assumed towards each other an air of most hypocritical suavity and reciprocal confidence.

To the numerous applications for audiences

which poured in at the palace from ministers, magistrates, military officers, private individuals—all in fact who in this crisis felt or assumed to feel their allegiance particularly excited—one unvarying form of refusal was returned, for a full hour after the arrival of the elector and his friends. During this period, long and important when the urgent circumstances of the case are considered, Ghebbard Truchses was employed in an affair of the utmost moment to himself and others. What it was, the sagacity of the reader may perhaps divine; but as it was a profound secret for the rest of the world, we must not for the present raise the veil which covered the transaction.

At the dinner table that day, the three magistrates, who came punctually in obedience to the elector's invitation, were dazzled by a display of female beauty and elegance rarely approached, and certainly never surpassed, even by the frequent combinations of loveliness which this most amorous and gallant sovereign

was so proud to entertain and so assiduous in collecting. At his left hand sat Agnes de Mansfeldt, at his right the Duchess of Saxe-Cobourg ; and much did the guests marvel that though the place of highest honour was occupied by the latter princess, still an equal share of reverential etiquette seemed conceded to her less elevated friend and rival in beauty ; while the dignified courtesy which the prince-bishop offered to the one, bore no comparison to the warmth, the softness, the intense yet tempered devotion which in looks, words, and gestures, he lavished on the other. And Agnes, on her part, seemed to wear the honours which were thus accorded to her with an undefinable mixture of modest reserve and triumphant tenderness. Pride did not flash from her eye, nor did self-importance curl her lips or agitate her frame. She sat with a careless grace ; and a look of abstraction seemed at times to say that her glances were rather turned inwards to the examination of her own sensations than fixed on

external objects. A sudden blush occasionally covered her face, and threw a richer glow of beauty into its whole expression; then again the blood forsook the cheeks and brow, as though a heart-faintness had summoned it back; to give new strength to the organ of life and all its subtle movements. The natural dignity of her character was sure to adapt itself to all circumstances and occasions. There was therefore no awkwardness manifest to impair the effect of her charms; which was rather heightened than weakened—particularly to those initiated into the forenoon's secret—by the embarrassment arising from the efforts of a strong mind and sensitive heart, to restrain the pride and moderate the timidity which struggled within her.

Ghebhard Truchses bore himself like a conqueror sure of his triumph; the flush of victory on his brow, its throb within his breast; but his mind full of the great necessity of holding in check every thought which might betray the

voluptuous weakness he revelled and rejoiced in. Nor could any living eye detect in him a fear, a doubt, or an uneasiness notwithstanding the critical and most hazardous aspect of his affairs.

The repast finished, the elector and the ladies rose from table and the party retired to the withdrawing rooms, Duchess Anne leaning on her princely entertainer's right arm, Agnes on his left—and well was she satisfied that *it* was the place of honour, while she felt his heroic heart throbbing against the hand which the nervous pressure of his arm held close but softly to his breast. The afternoon was variously occupied, but Truchses, who had most variety and most occupations, thought it never-ending. At length, leaving the ladies and some of the less important and least elevated in rank of his male guests to themselves, the elector passed through several saloons and anti-rooms to his state closet, followed at his desire by sundry functionaries, his friends Nuenar and

Kriechlingen, and the three city magistrates whose presence formed so important a feature in the day's proceedings. Truchses had not failed to perceive the effect produced on the last-mentioned individuals by the lofty confidence of his manner, which though not put on for a purpose, he was not unwilling to profit by to the utmost. He, therefore, as soon as they were seated at the council tables, entered at once on the subject of the conference, by proposing in a blended tone of insinuation and authority, that the keys of the several city gates should be forthwith brought to the palace and delivered into his keeping, as a measure of security, and also as a matter of right which he now saw occasion to insist on.

The magistrates, taken as the elector wished by surprise, still under the influence of his imposing manners, his condescensions, and all the dangers of courtly temptations, were very nearly caught in the trap so daintily baited. The first in rank, Dr. Eccias, a man of refined

and cultivated tastes and moreover of delicate nerves, a religious sceptic and not over-rigid moralist, with the rude lesson of the morning still in his heart, and the honied flavour of the afternoon blandishments floating in his brain, was on the point of at once acceding to the abrupt demand. Krantz, the next in station, a man of subservient character and little firmness, was ready to approve whatever concession his learned colleague might make. But Jacob Schlaun, a sworn friend and constant companion of Hilpaert of Cologne, was of a different stamp. Sturdy and bold, a bigot in faith, a despiser of rank, he felt only for the city's privileges, the danger of heresy, and the pride of standing as a bulwark for the one and against the other. No sooner, therefore, did his quick grey eye catch the wavering expression of Eccias's glance, and the smile so expressive of yielding on the face of Krantz, than he started up, and said with stentorian voice,

“No, I say no, to your highness’s proposal. And I speak out of my regular order to give time for thought to those who should precede me. My head is not turned by the fumes of court flattery, nor my tenderness touched by your highness’s distress. I tell you boldly, elector and archbishop as I own you to be, that I, burgess and burgomaster will never consent—and without unanimity on all points of local administration every decision is null—to give the keys of our city into the keeping of any sovereign, and least of all to one whose military force is out of proportion with the security of our rights, and whose hankering after heresy forebodes destruction to our religion. I have said my say. I will stand by my resolution to the death. And now, with your highness’s good permission, I take my leave.”

So saying he moved away, throwing a parting look of reproach on his colleagues and of defiance on all the rest. No one attempted to oppose the departure of the bold citizen, but

every eye was fixed on the elector. A quick but tremendous struggle was evident, between his naturally impetuous temper and the provisional calmness which pervaded it ever since the commencement of his passion for Agnes. But the inscrutable workings of the human heart had on this particular day completed a new phase in our hero's feelings, and a single circumstance had thrown him back in a great measure on the old elements of his natural character so long in abeyance. A few hours previously such an incident as this would have passed by without power to stir up his boiling energy. But now—the reader must analyze the cause, we only relate the effect—the long-suppressed violence of his nature burst forth, as, with an expression of countenance that struck terror into all around him, and in accents whose fierce utterance made the retreating burgomaster bound back on his path, he cried,

“Stop! Dare not, at your peril, quit my

presence without my commands! Audacious dog, is it thus and by *thee* I may be braved? Miscreant, beware how you miscalculate on my forbearance and your own meanness. What, in my very palace, in my council-room, in presence of my noble friends, under the very ægis of my sovereign escutcheon, to be defied! and by a worm like thee! By Heavens!—”

The burst of passion was checked, not only by that prompt feeling of one's own dignity which comes, lightning-like, in the very height of such a crisis, but by the sight of the pale, stern look of the bold burgher, who had turned and stood fixed during the tirade.

“What say you to my proposal, to my demand—good sirs?” asked Truchses, abruptly addressing Eccias and Krantz.

“Whatever suits your highness's pleasure,” stammered forth the former; and the other echoed every word with gestures of profound submission.

“You hear this, citizen Schlaun,” said Truchses, “now speak your decision—I give you fair play and ample time for reflection—yes, or no?”

“No!” exclaimed the undaunted burgher, folding his arms across his breast as though he worked himself up to his worst fate.

“No!” cried the elector, springing from his seat and drawing his sword. “No! demons of hell, is this to be borne! By the sacred host of heaven, your head shall pay for this before morning!” And as he uttered this hasty oath and pronounced the unjust sentence, he struck the table before him with the flat of his rapier, with such force that the vibration loosened three of the four lions that stood out in half relief from the blazoned escutcheon of his family arms, that hung against the wall directly before him; and the gilded emblems fell rattling together on the floor. Truchses started, and gazed on the blank left in the frame-work before him.

“So may the tyrant fall and crumble!” muttered Schlaun.

“Away with him!” said Truchses, in a hollow and imperfect tone. Schlaun was instantly seized and removed from the chamber by some of the angry witnesses of the scene. The elector waved his hand, in token of his wish to be left alone. He was promptly obeyed; but when all the rest retired, silently as if by stealth, he caught Nuenar by the arm, and closed the door.

“Adolphus,” said he, solemnly, looking full upon his friend, who read in his pale cheeks, fixed eyes, and compressed lips the workings of superstition on his powerful and enthusiastic mind — “this is conclusive of my fate, and thou, my best friend, art its fitting witness. I began my political life with an omen—it will close under the influence of another. The warning strikes upon my heart and shoots its sting upwards to my brain. I feel my destiny from this moment—but I fear it not. How

true an emblem of my mind was that shattered escutcheon ! The four lion attributes that formed my character were there justly figured out — ambition, pride, energy and courage. The three first are, at once and as by a stroke of magic, swept from my mind's tablet—the last alone remains. That clings to me and clutches still—death only may shake it off ! But for the rest, they are gone, gone for ever —yet in their stead is no blank left. No, Nuenar, inspiring and immortal love has taken the vacant place, or rather forced them from their usurped position, for it was ever inherent in my heart, but never, oh, never till now throned rightly in my spirit. The forenamed passions kept the soil employed, enriched it too, mayhap, for the prompt growth of that all-fragrant flower of love which blooms there now. I mourn not for the fate that waits me. Rich, happy, and content in the one great blessing now secured to me, I throw behind me the grandeur and the pomp of life without a

sigh. From this hour forth I hold them in utter scorn, I live alone for love and *her*. But are they not the same? Is not she the passion's true personification? Is not it but the moral emblem of her perfection? Oh, Nuenar, how serious and how solemn is my happiness this moment! Now only do I feel worthy of what awaits me. All the vulgar dross of my nature seems by enchantment sifted and scattered forth. The bright pure ore alone exists, a fitting offering for the shrine I go to worship at. Speak not to me, good Nuenar. If I am deceived by fancy's colouring leave me in my delusion. Let what I feel be truth, reality, existence—for this night at least—nor do I seek or hope for a morrow that would bring me other or better wisdom. Now, Nuenar, farewell! Let no one see or seek me. I go hence by the private way to—leave me, leave me, my friend! There are feelings, weaknesses if thou wilt, which not even such an one as thou must see. But hold—I must

not stain this heaven-like day by any act of wrong. Let that fool-hardy but honest burgher be released; and leave those poor magistrates in possession of their paltry keys. He is pardoned and doubly so, for his stubborn virtue first, then that he was the means of yon strange accident which brought me to this thorough knowledge of myself, this perfect purification of heart and mind and soul. God bless you, Adolphus! To-morrow—but *it* will come of itself—too soon—too soon! Then let me not, even in thought, bound over the brief eternity of my bliss!”

Nuenar replied not, and Truchses was in a moment afterwards alone. Evening had now set in. He watched the sunset with such anxious yet solemn interest as the placid death-scene of a saint might inspire in a true believer. He saw a sure heaven of happiness beyond. He listened intensely, as each succeeding chime announced that old Time grew older—an age he thought in every minute! But in a few

long-coming and long-passing hours he was no more in solitude. And *then* the concentrated powers of his whole being had found an object.

CHAPTER III.

ON the evening following the day of those transactions, a party of students of the university were taking their promenade on the public walk by the river's side. Among them was Ulrick Von Leckenstein. The events which had signalized the festival of St. Urbain were already known, publicly but imperfectly, at Bonn, for correct and rapid communication between places ever so little distant from each other was not among the practical advantages of that age. Besides which all communication between the capital and the revolted city was cut off, and the fugitives from the latter in the elector's suite were not over-anxious to give a detailed version of the affair. A thousand exaggerated

reports and wild conjectures were consequently afloat, but Ulrick was far better informed than the generality of his comrades, from his intimacy at the palace with several members of the household, and from his having passed a portion of the day which our story has now reached with Duchess Anne and his cousins Freda and Emma. He was therefore much sought after among the groups of idle and curious youths who thronged the path or lounged on the banks of the river; and it was while in the midst of one of those, and answering as fast as he could the thick-coming questions of his companions, that he was startled by another student, who had just joined the party, announcing aloud that a stranger, evidently of distinction, and who though travelling *incog.* had been recognised as the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, had half an hour before arrived in the city, and taken up his quarters at the principal hostel situated in the chief square. While Ulrick paused suddenly in his recital, and then in his turn put

some questions to the new comer, he observed, in the act of listening, close by, a man with dark hair and beard, a large mantle and slouched hat, the feather of which hung over and partly concealed his features. This person, as soon as Ulrick's eye was fixed on him, held up a letter which he immediately again concealed beneath his cloak. The young student, alive to any prospect of adventure, and filled at the moment with one prominent thought, seized the first opportunity of breaking away from his companions, and approached the stranger who loitered in the avenue. As Ulrick passed him, throwing a significant glance, he placed the billet in his hands. It was in a moment torn open, and contained the following words hastily written, in ink that was scarcely dry :—

“ The crisis of my fate has arrived. Let it be also that of our happiness ! A hateful husband comes to claim me—shall I not find an adored lover ready to snatch me from his grasp ? Oh, Leckenstein, it is to you only I can now

look—on you alone may I depend ! You will not abandon me, I know you will not. Come to me then, at once, guided by the bearer of this, our faithful and disinterested friend. He will manage everything for our immediate flight. Alas ! alas ! what a dreadful struggle have I had with myself before I could thus tell you that I am wholly and for ever your's, Anne.

“ It is my tears—tears of shame and of love which have so blotted the paper.”

Leckenstein could scarcely command his faculties sufficiently to allow of his clearly understanding what he with difficulty read. His brain swam, and his eyes saw through a mist ; yet he devoured with imperfect vision the delicious repast thus opened before his vanity. His first movement was to press the exquisite epistle to his lips. Then in the fervour of his delight he crushed it in his clenched hands—but a bitter shock was the consequence, in fear lest he had destroyed this precious proof of his triumph.

“ A sovereign princess ! A woman so elevated

in rank, so beautiful in person, so lovely in mind!" This was the sequence in which Von Leckenstein's feelings followed each other. He was beside himself with transport. He forgot the very purport of the billet in the rapture it inspired. But there was one close at hand to recal him to himself. The stranger pulled his mantle, and said, as Ulrick started and looked round,

"Is your mind made up? Will you let her perish?" The hoarse whisper in which this was said, evidently to conceal the speaker's voice, sounded mysteriously in Ulrick's ear. Before he could answer, the man added,

"There is no time to be lost. If you would save her, and secure your own triumph, follow me!"

The last words were a command rather than an entreaty. Ulrick instinctively obeyed them; and the quick pace of his guide was too slow for his buoyant anxiety. He scarcely felt the ground as he hurried on, close to his fast-striding conductor.

“What a conquest! How quickly—how easily made? How desperately she loves me!—a sovereign princess!” So soliloquised the ambitious and self-enamoured student; and ravished by the music of those oft-repeated thoughts, he looked neither to the right nor to the left, nor did a single doubt or fear arise to check their harmony, till on coming in sight of the electoral palace the stranger stopped short, turned round, raised his hat, and looked full in Leckenstein’s face.

“Need I pull off my false beard, friend Ulrick?” said he, with a laugh half of mockery, half of triumph.

“Good God! Is this you, count! alive and *here*! why it is reported and believed that you were killed in the pillage of the palace at Cologne—and again that you—”

“Well, well, all reports are false but the true one which I make of myself, that I am here, unscathed and ready to serve a friend and save the woman who adores him. Is your mind made up?”

“What a craven wretch you must suppose me to think it ever wavered ! Lead on, Count Scotus, my impatience knows no bounds. Where is the dear and beloved object of—”

“Patience, patience, good Ulrick. You have the whole game in your hands, you must not throw it away.”

“Oh, count, can I believe all this? Does the princess indeed love me?”

“What did I tell you the first evening we met at Ghebhard’s table? Was I not a true prophet?”

“You are a marvellous one, if this be indeed real.”

“If ! Have you not the proof there in characters not to be blotted out? Doubt nothing—fear nothing—but heed well my words. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg is indeed in Bonn. That babbler told the truth—and I told it to him, as I walked in search of you. I knew from his quivering eye that he was a chattering gossip, and I wanted, by the effect the sudden

news would produce on you, to prepare you for the hasty billet of which I was the bearer. There, I have anticipated your question."

"You have indeed! I was just about to ask you why you told this news to a man you did not know."

"You see, Ulrick, I *did* know something of him—as I did of you the first hour I sat in your company. But be thankful that I did, for it is to my hint that you owe all your coming happiness. What a grand success! You will be immortalized this very night—history has a niche prepared for your name—you take your place by the side of princes! Happy, enviable Ulrick!"

"There is no time to be lost—you said so just now, count—what must be done?"

"The first thing, my young friend, is to restrain your impatience; the next to follow me. Then you must throw yourself at the feet of your royal mistress—*royal*, Ulrick! The lover, the beloved of a king's daughter

and a sovereign's wife! Once there—I will take care to place you—you must follow the dictates of your passion. That will teach a man of twenty what he ought to do. But be prepared for resistance, remonstrance, refusal."

"What, after such a letter as this?"

"Tut, tut, Ulrick, you know little yet of woman. It is in the very moment of consent, aye when they throw themselves into a lover's arms, that they show the greatest semblance of reserve."

"Indeed!"

"Aye, indeed, and you must be prepared to find it so this very evening. But let nothing daunt you. Push well the advantage you have gained. Press her to instant flight; speak boldly of her letter, even should she feign ignorance of your meaning, or deny the fact. Remember all she has at stake, and what a desperate yet deep game she must play."

"She has indeed!" said Ulrick thoughtfully, and then added, before Scotus could

resume, "But whither are we to fly? How escape pursuit? and by what means provide for the cost of this perilous step?"

"And do you then think," replied the Italian with his usual glance of malicious contempt, "that the princess has not settled all this beforehand? I am her counsellor, my friend, and we have the whole plan laid down. There is no time to explain it to you now; but you must speak to her as if it were all arranged by joint accord. Speak of the boat to cross the river—the horses on the opposite bank—the safe retreat, and all in a loud and earnest tone. Women hate whisperers when there is matter of moment to be done."

"Count, I owe you everything for this hurried but important advice."

"Good! but beware of mentioning my name to her. It will be more delicate to make believe that there is no third person concerned."

"But what use is there in such unmeaning deception?"

“ Oh, women like all that by-play, even in the most straight-forward cases.”

“ Well, well, I am but your pupil, count.”

“ An apt one.”

“ And a docile.”

“ Come on, then, and take the prize of your talents and your obedience.”

They walked away towards the straggling grounds and rough plantation behind the palace. It was rarely that it suited Scotus's purposes to enter boldly by the front of any building. After some further conversation and repeated instruction as to Ulrick's course of conduct in the coming interview, the associates approached the private way leading to the apartments occupied by Duchess Anne and her friends Freda and Emma. Those appropriated to the use of Agnes de Mansfeldt the previous day were now vacant. The appearance of Scotus was a passport for admission for himself and whoever might accompany him. He therefore merely bowed to the attendants, who loitered on the way and

reverentially saluted him, and he passed silently on, followed by Von Leckenstein.

The reader may have been surprised at this quick re-appearance on the stage of one whom there was good reason to believe was otherwise disposed of. We therefore hasten to tell that Scotus, well aware of the nullity of the document given to him by Bishop Ernest, lost no time in arranging it in such a manner as to make it amply effective for a value infinitely greater than its nominal one. At the first halting place for the refreshment of Imogen, himself, and the horses on the road from Cologne to Aachen, he dexterously erased the whole of the writing contained in the treacherous treasury order, meant for his death-warrant, with the exception of the date, his own name, the epithets of honour attending it, and the writer's signature. He carried abundant materials about with him to effect all such purposes as that, and he had as has been repeatedly shown an aptitude for forgery as convenient as

his conscience was flexible. He therefore speedily and cleverly inserted in the blank space an order on the bishop's intendant and the comptroller of his private affairs, for the immediate delivery, to "the well-beloved and most honourable bearer, Count Jerome Scotus," of the caskets containing the state jewels, and of an escort suited to his rank and the importance of his mission to ensure his safe passage back to "our Electoral Palace of Cologne."

No human being was ever better adapted than was Scotus for carrying on an impudent fraud. His air of haughty condescension and cold decision might have deceived the most suspicious functionary. On the present occasion it was quite successful. The intendant knew well the important part which Scotus played in his master's political intrigues, and he never doubted the authenticity of his present demand, particularly when accompanied by the longed-for, but not so soon expected, intelligence of the success of the revolt, and

of Bishop Ernest's actual installation in the elector's palace, with sundry fictitious details of imaginary events—all founded on a sufficient basis of reality to give force and consistency to the whole. Scotus received the caskets filled with their valuable contents. He could scarcely believe in this continued train of good luck; yet he was by no means satisfied with it. Like all speculators, each new success made him more insatiable. His cupidity and his cunning were alike involved in the anxiety for other schemes; and a most unlooked-for occurrence threw him into the way of the new adventure, in the commencement of which we have just left him.

Scarcely had he received the jewels from the hands of the rejoiced intendant to whom he gave receipts and duplicates of receipts, acknowledgments, and acquittances, so multiplied, verbose, and super-abundantly cautious, that he could not suppress a smile as he signed them, and just as he quitted the city of Liege, accompanied by his secretary and his escort of an officer and

twenty mounted arquebusiers, the intendant and three or four others of the episcopal ministers and some of the civil dignitaries attending him beyond the gates, when he was abruptly met by the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, travelling with all possible speed in the direction of Cologne, in consequence of the pressing communications received from Scotus, on the subject of Duchess Anne's imputed passion for Von Leckenstein, and mysterious allusions to other transactions said to implicate her honour and that of her husband in various ways.

Scotus was surprised but not disconcerted at this rencontre ; for he was at the moment considering the best means of giving his convoy the slip before they approached the territory of Cologne, having already made up his mind to avoid the high roads as long as he was obliged, for appearance sake, to travel in company with the escort. The duke, on seeing his secret correspondent, had no doubt but that he came expressly from Cologne to meet him ; nor had

he time to marvel at the armed troop evidently in attendance on the Italian, ere the latter, promptly following up the duke's acknowledgment for his supposed attention in having come so far to meet him, told him, with great deference of manner, that the escort was furnished entirely in honour of his highness. Men of that station in those days were too prone to believe everything that tended to flatter their dignity. The rude lessons of modern times have made them less credulous, but even now a courtly hypocrite might find little difficulty in deceiving a sovereign prince on a more serious point than the one in question.

Scotus entered the duke's carriage; and a short discussion in which the former took the lead, the pre-occupied prince taking no heed of details, ended in its being decided that at the close of evening the escort was to be dismissed, and the rest of the journey to be prosecuted as privately as possible. The deeds already done by the Italian were sufficient to make privacy

essential to his present safety. But the necessity of self-preservation—for a confession on the part of Duchess Anne would have made Europe too narrow for his future protection—now determined him to the commission of an act, the notion of which had at times floated on his mind, but had never acquired the consistency of decision until now. He felt Duchess Anne's existence to be incompatible with his own; at least on such conditions as he would live upon. So that independent of his mercenary views on the duke, he had an all-sufficient motive for the risk of his present journey. The proposed plan of travelling was followed; and in the course of the two days occupied in the route to Bonn, the city of Cologne being carefully avoided, ample time was given to Scotus to inform and mis-inform his royal companion and dupe on every subject of a public or private nature which it suited his purpose to touch on. When they arrived at their destination the deceived and exasperated prince was ripe and

ready for any act of violence against his innocent wife and her imputed paramour ; while with the spurious generosity of a jealous man he lavished on the wretch who so played on him, written engagements, easily convertible into cash, for sums of great amount as the reward of his services—vile even if he had spoken truth instead of inventing lies. Having disposed of the duke, Scotus immediately flew to the palace, where he had learned by a scout sent to Cologne and thence preceding him to Bonn, that Duchess Anne was lodged, while at the same time he gained the favourable information that the elector had set out the same morning for his palace at Godesberg, a short league distant. The ground was thus clear for his operations. There was no one to question him as to his former conduct, or to interfere with him now. By all the elector's household he was believed to be the friend and guest of Truchses, and he had no inquiry to fear as to the cause of his disappearance during the previous day, and which

had led to the report of his having perished in the tumult at Cologne. He was therefore unobstructed in his approach to Duchess Anne—and his announcement of the duke's arrival and coming visit so convinced her of the sincerity and success of all his former doings as to throw the credulous princess into a transport of joy and confidence, which prepared her thoroughly for even a grosser imposition than the one he was about to inflict on her. Callous to that most affecting sight, an amiable woman trusting to man's honour and sincerity, the hardened villain proceeded to her ruin, in cold-blooded avarice, and loving imposture even when it was not necessary; he put on one of his ready disguises when he sallied forth with the forged letter in search of Von Leckenstein, another unconscious victim to his atrocity.

Everything turned out in favour of the Italian's base designs. He was like a fortunate gambler in a career of luck. His most dangerous strokes succeeded. His victims seemed

to play into his hands. But he it remembered that he calculated with skill both characters and chances. It has been said that conduct is fate. Let it be added that cunning is fortune.

Having placed the Duke of Saxe-Coburg with three or four of his followers in a place convenient to the palace, where they could observe him as he entered with Von Leckenstein, he had now only to introduce the latter to an anti-room adjoining the most private chamber of Duchess Anne, with directions to wait until he had prepared her for his appearance, when the Italian was to retire, giving a signal to the lover—as the poor youth fancied himself—to at once enter on the final scene of his expected triumph.

“My benefactor — my saviour ! oh, how your presence rejoices me !” were the exclamations with which the enthusiastic duchess hailed the coming of the destroyer, as he entered her chamber. Scotus started with astonishment, on seeing that she was clothed in robes of bridal

white, and richly decorated with the contents of the casket which Agnes had placed in her hands, two nights previously, in the palace of Cologne. Surprise alone had not so affected the Italian's nerves if delight had not completed the electric combination. He required no explanation of what he saw. He read the mind of the princess as easily as he could a printed page.

“Ah, adorable duchess,” exclaimed he, “what a charming device is this! who but you could have imagined so exquisite a plan to bring back a wayward mind to the memory of its first, best joys? This is indeed like yourself, pure and beautiful.”

“You approve, then, my receiving him thus? It cannot be construed into affectation, nor accused of trick?”

“Who durst apply such terms to any act of your's? No; this is the symbol of a truly innocent delight, and its effect will be marvellous. The duke will fancy himself once

more a bridegroom—this will be a night of enchantment !”

The duchess cast down her eyes to avoid the expression of countenance which accompanied these words. It was a terrible mixture of loose feeling and concentrated villany, one of those looks which a virtuous woman dares not read even if she could. Scotus saw its effect.

“Ah, forgive me,” cried he, “if hopeless passion and fierce jealousy carry me away for a moment. But I as quickly return to my great object—to secure your bliss and forget my own misery. I am the slave of your happiness—I sacrifice all to that.”

“Alas, Count Scotus !” replied the duchess, the chords of vanity and pleasure vibrating in strange discord with those of modesty and fear, “alas that you should suffer, while I by your means alone am placed on the very summit of enjoyment ! Oh how intoxicating is recovered confidence and the return of estranged affection. How wild I am in my happiness !

I know not what to do or say. I could almost worship you from very gratitude. I am like a lost child brought back to its home. I laugh and weep at once. God grant that my poor brain may stand firm, nor turn mad with joy!"

The duchess burst into tears, and sank sobbing hysterically on a chair. Scotus did not fall at her feet in remorse and shame. He stood still, with folded arms, unflinching nerves and unmoistened eye, a model of most hideous villany. To plunge an enemy into ruin, to trample on him who has wronged us, to force a poisoner to drain to the dregs the draught he mixed for another, to turn against a false friend the weapons of his treason, all this is within the legitimate scope of vengeance. But to lead a virtuous mind to ruin for base lucre, to raise up one who trusts you to a height of imagined bliss only to dash them down in greater certainty of destruction, is the very wantonness of crime. It is in human nature, but as a poison drop in a fragrant flower, an

occult and rarely-extracted exception to its brightness and sweetness. So stood Jerome Scotus on this occasion, while his beautiful victim trembled with agitation, and wondered that he uttered not one word of relief or encouragement. She would have laid her hand on his—but she dreaded his touch. The sound of his voice would have been both balm and music to her shattered nerves. His silence was a negative cruelty of terrible effect, and he was resolved to let it work. At length, agitated beyond farther bearing, the duchess exclaimed,

“ Oh, speak to me, Count Scotus ! say any thing, of hope, encouragement, blame even, if I have done wrong in this fantastic decoration of my person ; aye, of despair, if you have any doubt of our success. Your silence kills me—I feel as if hurled down into depths of gloom.”

“ Nay, fair duchess, do not thus sport with your own happiness nor construe falsely my silent admiration of your charms, and my fear

of interrupting your sacred glow of feelings. Those tears, are the gushings of joy—that trembling its excitement. Mistake not those exquisite symptoms for their own reverse. All will be well. And now recover yourself; for you have a great part to play.”

“ Alas, I am a poor actor, and much I fear me I shall be an imperfect one. Had I not after all better trust to nature’s prompting than seek for effects from artificial means?”

“ What ! do you, then, at this moment of triumph run counter to my council ?”

“ Oh, no—but—”

“ Do you doubt my skill, thus brought to its grand test ? Enough ! speak not, I see you are re-assured ; and well you may be so, for great has been my labour and perfect its success. Follow up then your own good fortune with spirit and confidence. Nothing else is wanting now. The duke comes back, enamoured to excess ; and jealousy has effected what reason, virtue, and duty failed to do. That strong

excitement was required to lead him back, and it is on its all powerful impulse that your fate now hangs. It must now work on him in earnest."

"Still! must we still play upon his feelings, still stoop to deceit? Oh, not for less than his recovered heart would I have ever done this."

"Nor would I for less have counselled it. But having gone so far we must go on. The vain fool Leckenstein waits without. Will you now admit him?"

"Oh, not yet! In mercy, Count Scotus, spare me yet awhile, and support me, cheer me up, for my spirit begins to faint. Heavens! must I play this cruel farce to the end? my brow blushes at the thought. Am I not degraded low, in leading on this youth to those manifestations of weakness, and the suffering it must lead to? Can any purpose of my own good justify this injury to another?"

"To be sure it can," replied the callous-conscienced deceiver—"for even supposing it an

ill, bountiful nature always yields a compensation. So far in answer to your doubt as to the right to act for your own good. But in fact you do no injury, but good rather, in teaching this insolent boy a lesson for his life. How durst he raise his thoughts to one like you, or imagine you could receive his love?"

Scotus saw that this argument did not produce its effect; for the vanity of having inspired young Ulrick's affection excused his presumption. The Italian therefore turned against her her own weapon of defence.

"But think not, duchess," said he abruptly, "that he loves you. I find I must set you right at last. It is sheer pride in your rank that leads him on. He comes in the glory of conquest, not in the humility of passion, to throw himself at your feet, that he may boast of having trampled you under his. You doubt? you are wounded, disgusted, shocked; so ought you to be—for he has told me this."

"Told you this!"

“ Aye, and for that it is that I have no compassion in his punishment. It is due to your honour and to his baseness. Every element of your dignity as princess and as woman should rise up to crush him.”

Every element of Duchess Anne’s weakness *did* rise up to mortify her keenly, and to urge her to fling back the indignity on him who was presented to her in a point of view so humiliating to herself. The crowd of her feelings now seemed to have found a point round which they might rally. A double triumph seemed within her reach—and she now at length entered, with her whole heart and without a qualm, into the plan against which all the better and finer feelings of her nature had revolted. A presumed offence against her vanity produced an effect more powerful than a project for her happiness.

“ Then let this presumptuous conqueror come in,” said she; “ and do you, my invaluable friend, prepare my lord for the scene,

which he is to overhear and I am now quite ready to act."

"Noble princess ! Admirable woman ! Inimitable wife ! You now stand on the summit of your triply-founded throne, fit to be obeyed, and worshipped by the world."

With the utterance of those words the Italian retired ; and the duchess, after pacing the room with a few haughty strides, took her place on a couch, ready to receive her lover.

CHAPTER IV.

“THERE, there, Ulrick, is the open way to your bliss. She awaits you, in bridal robes and royal decorations! Go in man, and reap the rich harvest which I have sown for you,” said Scotus, as he passed into the outer room, and led the almost bewildered youth to the door which opened into the duchess’s chamber. As Leckenstein entered, he disappeared, and, bounding in the buoyancy of an evil spirit on a mission of ill, he soon found the half-maddened husband and his satellites, and led them unobstructed by another passage to the dressing-closet of the duchess, the door of which he left open by preconcerted arrange-

ment with her, so as that every word which passed between her and Leckenstein might be distinctly heard. The duchess had previously dismissed her attendants, with orders not to interrupt the visit of Count Scotus and his friend whom she expected to come with him to an important conference. The stage was therefore clear for this chief scene of the desperate drama about to be acted.

Ulrick entered the chamber with that boldest species of temerity which arises from inflated hope. Every look of the Italian, the tone of his voice was of still more powerful effect than the words he uttered. Ulrick saw a paradise where there was but a prison, and fancied himself a hero being but a dupe. The sight of the princess reclined on her couch, paler than the robes she wore, and with an expression of countenance he could by no means penetrate, completely overwhelmed him. He sank at once from rashness to timidity. She, on her part, perceiving his emotion, and reading in its

evident symptoms a sincerity and a modesty so different from what she had expected, was in her turn deeply affected ; and thus without a word being spoken, the daring youth and the indignant princess in an instant resumed their original simplicity of character, and proved to be quite unfitted to sustain the parts they had so promptly assumed. Scotus knowing the yielding nature of both, felt that no time was to be lost ; and as soon as Leckenstein had recovered himself sufficiently to stammer out a few sentences of admiration, and love, and gratitude, a faint rustling in the closet told Duchess Anne that the Italian accompanied by her husband had taken their appointed station.

This certainty completed the total loss of self-possession which the trembling utterance and timid looks of Ulrick had begun to effect. She felt that her husband's ear was ready to catch her words, that his eye might be fixed on her from the scarcely closed door. A sense of

shame and dread rushed on her. One pang of thought upset the deep-wrought fallacies of her betrayer, and the entire of those hopes and calculations which were built on them. She viewed herself in the light of a false practiser of unholy arts, an accomplice in base plots, doubly deceiving her husband and this lover—for in that real aspect only she could now see Leckenstein—degrading her rank, her sex, her own purity—the veil was torn from her eyes, and this was the prospect she beheld. Silent, almost breathless from very fear, and choked with a thousand struggling emotions, she scarcely heard the voice of Ulrick, as he, recovering confidence from her abstraction, and interpreting it into returning tenderness, threw himself on his knees before her, and poured out incoherent rhapsodies of passion, raising his voice, and rapidly pressing on his suit in accordance with the Italian's instructions. Many minutes rolled on; and at length Ulrick reached what he believed the climax of his

eloquence, when he perceived the big tears trickle down the pallid cheeks of the duchess, and saw that she had not strength for even an attempt to check them, while the respiration which just heaved her breast was too faint to swell into a sigh.

“Now, now then, divinest of women!” exclaimed he, “now is the time to crown my happiness by instant flight. The boat is ready by the river side, the horses wait us on the shore beyond. Everything is arranged according to our plans. Let us then fly ere thy hated husband has time to approach thee, while love and hope and happiness all urge us on.”

The duchess though unable to utter a word, understood fully all that was said, and she shrunk back repugnant from the embraces which the ardent youth would have lavished on her. She would have given worlds for power to speak one sentence to repel her insinuated complicity in the plans for flight. But her tongue seemed to cleave to her parched mouth,

and a faint hysteric sobbing were the only sounds she uttered.

“Oh, why this hesitation, adored princess? By this precious document of affection, I implore thee pause not. To the warm words of thy letter and the warmer tears which blotted the paper I appeal, as better arguments than any I can urge. Fly, oh, fly with me—or here, in the sacred solitude of this paradise, complete my happiness, and then let fate do its worst.”

Leckenstein having approached closer and closer, now attempted to press the almost fainting duchess in his arms. At the moment the closet door was burst open with a loud crash, and the Duke of Saxe-Coburg rushed in, his drawn sword in his hand, and followed by a person closely masked and covered with a mantle, and three others whose brandished weapons and unvizored faces showed them ready to do, and not ashamed to look upon, any deed of destruction or darkness.

The duke, with furious imprecations, called on the astounded Leckenstein to defend himself, while his arm was held by his masked follower who seemed anxious to save the youth from a too hasty blow. But while the duke was thus secured from any act of intemperate fury, his armed creatures, thirsting for blood, rushed on the defenceless student, and ere he had time to place his hand on his weapon's hilt two of their blades were plunged into his body. He sunk weltering in his blood, which spirted profusely out upon the bridal robes of the now totally insensible duchess. Scotus seeing there were no eyes now open to recognize him, threw aside his mask, and flung himself between the murderers and the victim, ere they could repeat their blows, and called out loudly to the duke to prevent the completion of the tragedy—there. The hint was obeyed, and the unfortunate Ulrick was dragged from the chamber, unconscious of the violence and the indignity inflicted on his person. Scotus then watched with fiendish

expectation for the stroke which the furious husband had sworn he would himself inflict on his helpless wife. But instead of thus completing the guilty measure of his frenzy, he stood gazing on her beautiful but death-like face, and shocked that the fury of his followers had in a way so unmanly robbed his own arm of the vengeance which it alone should have executed, he lost for awhile all feelings of anger, all thought of revenge, in the overpowering horror of the scene. And had time been given for the duchess to recover her recollection, and to plead her cause in the affecting ardour of innocence, he would in such a mood have been more open to conviction than in the calmest moments of suspicion or indifference. But as melted wax, ready to receive the first impression which follows the fusion, so did his heated mind offer itself to the first impulse which was urged on it; and this came in a form irresistibly insidious.

“Most noble duke, this is enough for the

present," said Scotus, seeing that all the better feelings were at work in the prince's heart, and now determined to remove him from the scene ; " your honour is avenged—push no further your just wrath."

" As Heaven is my judge, Count Scotus," replied the duke, " I have no such design nor desire. More has been done already than I intended, and even had it not, the sight of that fair, frail sufferer—the victim of my own neglect—had satisfied all my anger. How beautiful she is ! yet what lines of anguish mark her lovely face ! Compunction is far stronger in me now than vengeance. Am I not after all to blame for this ? Should I have left her unguarded to the dangers of her own beauty, and her own innocence, while I pursued fantastic objects that fled and vanished as I followed them ? is not the blood of that poor youth on my head, though it has not stained my sword ? Am I not the most guilty of the three ?"

" This train of thought does honour to your

highness's heart, I will not combat the reasonings of a generous humanity. Rather let me encourage it, and urge on your highness that the sight of your person, breaking suddenly on her recovered senses would infallibly plunge the duchess into some violent convulsion. Had you not better retire, and leave it to my care to remove her with Archibald, he who struck no blow against her lover's breast?"

"Her lover!—True! you have roused me to myself again. By Heavens, I was on the point of bending down beside her, to watch her opening eyes, to speak comfort to her reviving consciousness, to own the wrong I have done her, and to forgive the errors which they begot! Even now I can scarce refrain from clasping her in my arms, and straining her into life and love once more!"

"Would she accept your embraces? But yes—your highness is perhaps right—she might for awhile believe them to be Leckenstein's."

The duke bit his lip and clenched his hands.

Scotus watched keenly, and saw these answers to his inuendo. He continued, with a careless air,

“ But your highness had better sheathe your sword. It so lately menaced the life of a dear friend that it might not find favour in her sight.”

“ Count, you can read the human heart better than I. I will follow your advice. Bear her, but gently and with all possible delicacy, to the hostel. I will precede you and have all ready for instant departure,” said the duke, putting his sword in its scabbard, and preparing to leave the room.

“ And these gems which decorate her highness? The eyes they were meant for rejoice not in them—How may they be disposed of?”

“ Worthless baubles! they deserve not a thought—let them remain as they are; or drop on the road, it is of no matter now.”

“ Your highness is known for a good judge of diamonds,” muttered Scotus to himself,

unable to repress a sneer and a smile. The duke neither heard nor heeded him; but stepping to the door to call in the man whom the Italian required as an assistant, he saw him in the anti-room, leaning over the still-breathing body of Leckenstein. The other two—the assassins—had left the palace, satisfied with their work and believing it complete. The duke motioned to Archibald to return to the inner room; and humanity rising stronger than all other feelings, he stooped over the bleeding youth in hopes of finding some chance of returning life. As he took up one of the nerveless hands in his, a paper fell from it. The duke had a buzzing recollection of the impassioned allusion to a letter, made by Ulrick as he pressed his suit. He looked on the paper, recognised as he would have sworn, his wife's hand-writing, read the billet, then thrust it into his breast; and, with one glance of rage and contempt, he spurned the senseless body with his foot, and hastily strode away.

Scotus enveloped the duchess in one of her rich mantles which he found at hand ; and preventing the attempts of the softened ruffian to apply water or other means of recovery, he placed her in the fellow's arms, and led the way from the chamber. He marked Ulrick's body as he passed, bathed in its blood ; and as he moved, without a shudder of remorse, though perhaps fear caused an inward thrill, he encountered some of the attendants, who on seeing the murderers flying, so soon followed by the fierce-looking duke, had in spite of the duchess's prohibition gathered together, and proceeded towards the remote wing where this tragedy was acted. The authoritative air of Scotus did not fail him ; and the awe he was held in ensured obedience to his commands.

“Go on, my friends,” said he, “you will find Herr Von Leckenstein in the anti-room, wounded by an accident. Summon his uncle and cousins to his aid. The duchess must be removed from the sight of the blood—I take

her to the duke, who is gone forward to the hostel. Be discreet as to this affair. It is a mere trifle."

A series of obsequious bows answered this brief speech. Let the listeners have imagined what they might, those were not the days for questioning the doings of princes, nobles, or bravoës, particularly within the walls of a palace.

As the group emerged from the court-yard, the air and the motion awoke the duchess for a moment from her fainting-fit. But her eyes closed and her heart sunk instantly again; and then she revived, and relapsed at intervals, nor did she recover her senses sufficiently to distinguish objects or recollect facts, until she found herself stretched on a loathsome bed in a miserable hut, faintly lighted by a mean lamp, with Scotus in the very act of preparing to lift her in his arms. A feeble shriek and a faint struggle told him she was conscious of her situation. A flash of hope crossed his

mind that she might have lost her reason. He held her from him, stared intently on her face which he turned towards the glimmering light, and he held in his breath with anxiety for her first words.

“Oh, Count Scotus,” said she, in tones barely articulate but spoken with all the reality of reason, “where am I, what does this mean? The duke, the duke! has aught befallen him? The murdered Leckenstein—I fear to ask more—but oh, tell me all ere my heart bursts with horror!”

“Hush, hush, for your life and soul! Discovery will be ruin to us both. I have snatched you from the furious duke, baffled his myrmidons, and am about to carry you to a place of safety till this frightful mistake is rectified by the sublime exercise of my art.”

“Oh God, oh God! pity, and pardon, and protect me!” exclaimed the duchess; and tears once more gushed from her heart’s fountains to her straining eyes

“It is my fault, and mine alone,” continued the Italian, “that failure has in this instance stopped our triumphant progress. But the perverseness of the duke and the audacity of Leckenstein were beyond all common calculations. I know them better now, and my next experiment must succeed.”

“Leckenstein lives then, and my husband is safe?”

“Aye, aye — there is no harm done — a scratch, a mere scratch to that bold boy. You may save or punish him yet as you may choose. But your own safety is the first object. The raging duke seeks your and my destruction. I saved you from his sword—and I would now preserve you from his search. Inquire not, object not, but accompany me from this hovel where I have hitherto concealed you.”

“Where would you lead me—how long have I been here? What frightful lapse of time have I gone through insensible—is’t day or night—where am I?” wildly asked the

duchess, her voice gaining strength and her body recovering its energies.

“For your very soul’s sake hush those questionings and trust to me implicitly—an incautious word, a moment lost, is now perdition. We must seek shelter beyond the Rhine; and as we go I can safely and surely work my spells. Ah, had not my over-anxious zeal to hurry on your happiness urged me too fast, all had been well. Had I not tried my solemn practises on land, and strove to force the ken of science through an envious mass of clouds last night, the great combination had been complete. But now the stars, Heaven’s brilliant types are out—and the swelling water offers its bosom to my ready bark, inviting us at once to safety from man’s wrong, and reflecting the bright tokens of Heaven’s justice. Seize, then, the propitious moment with calm confidence and glowing hope; let your prayers be directed towards those smiling skies, while your mind reads nature’s oracles which I will

now propound to you, without chance of harm or hindrance. Come, come, most lovely one! see, persecuting fate relents, and the broad harbour of happiness invites you to its refuge. Repose on my courage, my skill, and my energy. Think what I have already done for you. How near I was to the consummation of all—how sure I am of success. The duke is now close by me as it were—within the influence of the stars, whose magic rays stream down on his very head and whose essence enters into his heart. Oh, you shall see the wondrous exercise of my powers, and your beaming looks and ardent sighs shall mingle with heaven's light and breath, come, come."

The unfortunate duchess felt her heart cold at the bare mention of the Rhine—for she remembered that night when the Italian's words and looks drove her from its banks, in terror to the grove. But his jargon blandishments, his soothing voice, her own superstitious yearnings hushing her fears—one weakness gaining

an ignoble victory over another—she arose, and accepting his proffered arm, she quitted the hut ; but she started back and would have rushed again to its security, on seeing the broad dark river rolling almost close to her feet had he not held her firm, and with a whispered pretext of supporting almost lifted her the few paces across the raised embankment, down its sloping side, and into a boat which lay moored close by.

When Scotus held the Duke of Saxe-Coburg's arm as he burst into his wife's chamber, it was in the hope that the blade he obstructed would have been immediately turned against the breast of the princess, for he it was who had directed the bravoës and paid them beforehand, to save the duke from the risk of a combat, by killing the student on the spot. When he perceived that generous regret gained the mastery over false passion, and that the duchess ran no danger of becoming her husband's victim, he resolved to complete the sacrifice himself, for he dreaded

that with her recovered senses she would make an ample revelation of all that had passed, to her own and Ulrick's justification and to the utter blasting of his character. Besides, he hated her—though he had never loved her—for being insensible to the passion he had feigned for her person. Had his attachment been real it might have been returned ; for the birth of true passion almost always, if not always—there may be a rare exception—engenders a twin-feeling in the being from whom it catches the flame of life. But be this as it may, he hated and resolved to murder her. The dark bed of the Rhine was the surest and least likely to be discovered depository for her lifeless body ; and as he proceeded to the execution of his project, he coldly calculated the leagues which it would probably be carried by the quick current, ere some chance wave threw it upon shore. It has been seen how cleverly he got rid of the duke ; and scarcely had he quitted the palace, with Archibald the bravo, than he re-

lieved the latter from the burthen which he panted to get into his own grasp, and sent him on an errand, meaning nothing, to the place of rendezvous ; he immediately turning from it into an opposite direction and down upon that of the river.

During this time the dusk of evening had given place to the darkness of night. It seemed as if earth and heaven had shut their eyes upon the villain's doings. He found no obstacle whatever. Even the patrol's, so watchful in that bustling political crisis, appeared to avoid his path. He met only one man. His keen eye recognized the Reitre Captain Von Sweinishen, but as the latter seemed to heed him not he passed on and reached the river's side, the person of the duchess almost entirely covered by his ample cloak, and its little weight offering no obstruction to his progress. He had in the evening remarked a fisherman's hovel, and saw a ragged and squalid pair, its occupants, lounging listlessly at the door, just opposite to which a clumsy-looking skiff lay lightly on

the wave, fastened by a chain to the shore. Scotus had now reached this place and would have willingly entered the boat and proceeded at once to the consummation of his diabolical design, but he found the chain locked to an iron ring, and perceived through the dim obscurity that the boat contained no oars. His first notion was to deposit the still senseless princess within it, and then to seek the fisherman and obtain the wanting implements which would enable him to pass over, disencumbered and alone, to the opposite side of the river. But he feared lest his victim might recover her senses, cry out for help, and attempt to escape; and he also thought he heard steps and whispering voices—a guilty conscience makes populous a desert's gloom. He paused and stooped down with his burthen to the earth, that he might be more perfectly concealed and at the same time peer around with greater chance of discovering any human figure which might be crouching, like himself. He saw nothing but the fisher-

man's hut and the dark trees faintly waving in the breeze; and he could only hear the melancholy rustle of the leaves, and the quiet splash of the water against the river's bank and the sides of the skiff, and the distant murmur of the town. There were a few stars glimmering above, but no moonlight, and not wind enough to curl the waves into foam.

“She will sink soon and deep, and travel far below the surface without any chance of being washed ashore in this still night,” murmured Scotus unconsciously, as his eye rested on the heavy-rolling stream.

At this moment he felt his hitherto motionless burthen heave in a faint struggle; and he loosened the clasp of his own cloak and threw it into the nearest end of the boat, to mark her disembarrassed movements. She seemed relieved from the oppression, but was again still and listless. He put his face closer to her's. He caught no breathing on his cheek; but a faint, faint moan, like the fairy wailings of an

infant's dream, belied the notion that she was already dead. He then folded her mantle carefully around her and proceeded to the hut. A light was within, and low voices told that the wretched couple were reciprocating the monotonous plaint of their misery—what else have the poor, the sickly, and the ignorant to discuss?

A gentle tap at the door and an almost whispered invitation to open it was all the wary Italian ventured on. The double summons was answered by the raising of the latch and the appearance of the man, undressed as he had lain in his bed. Before he could make any inquiry of his visitor, the latter asked rapidly if he were not the owner of the skiff, and if he would hire it for the purpose of crossing the river.

“I am,” and “willingly,” were the brief replies; and a few minutes sufficed to allow the fisherman and his wife to throw on their scanty covering, while Scotus entered and placed the

scarcely-breathing duchess on the bed, and gave orders to the man to fetch the oars and unlock the chain, and to the woman to look out at a short distance from the cottage lest there might be some straggling passers-by. The air and appearance of the Italian and the glittering richness of the duchess's ornaments were sufficient to inspire complete obedience in these poor people, even without the piece of gold which he had already placed on the table, but which, as it shone in the lamp-light gleam, both wife and husband seemed afraid or ashamed to touch. Yet to obviate any possible squeamishness on their parts as to becoming accessories in the dubious and questionable evasion, he told them, in brief phrase and low accents, that the lady was his newly-married wife, and that he fled with her from the very altar steps from her pursuing kinsmen, by whom their liberties and lives were jeopardied. Enough had before been done to secure the sympathy of the needy pair, who would have had small

scruples in complying even had they doubted the tale. The abrupt entrance of the man, and his loud announcement that all was ready and no one in sight, aroused the duchess into that start of recovered sense which we have before described.

Scotus had shoved the boat from the shore, the fisherman's dark figure was lost in the gloom, the raised bank and the tall trees were vaguely-figured against the murky sky, and the duchess, chill, and trembling from speechless terror, clung to the rude, damp bench on which she had sunk, as though every motion of the Italian's oar threatened to upset the boat, or cast her over its side. He for some time left her totally to herself and to her agitation, his whole efforts being directed to the object of getting the boat forward, which his awkward management of the single oar, both as oar and rudder, made difficult and tedious. He stood for this purpose at the sternmost end, and as he strode across his own cloak which lay in a heap

where he flung it, his foot found an impediment in some soft substance beneath its heavy folds. He stepped over it and continued his pilotage, until having reached what he conjectured to be about the middle of the stream, the bank he had started from being now invisible, he paused and whistled shrilly. The signal was faintly answered from the other side ; but nothing was now to be distinguished but the dark water, in which the starlight reflection, breaking through heavy clouds, danced quivering here and there. As Scotus now quitted the stern and was stepping towards the middle of the boat, where Duchess Anne maintained her motionless place, he stooped to touch with his hand the object which he had before trod on, and he quickly started up and sprang forward in sudden terror, convinced that some living animal lay covered by his cloak ; exemplifying one of the strange anomalies of human nature,—he, who little feared either God or man, who laughed at common danger, and never shrunk from crime,

shuddered in his heart's depths at the touch of a dog, or the sight of a cat. Antipathy to domestic animals is perhaps no bad test of an inhuman disposition. The Italian expected every moment to be seized on and torn, by some shaggy guardian of the skiff, which had hitherto slept on its watch ; but finding himself unassailed, and not hearing even a snarl, he recovered his deliberate self-command.

“ Now, Duchess Anne,” said he, sternly and abruptly, “ fate hath at length placed us fitly together. We are now indeed alone—the heavens above us, the waters underneath—we are no more mere beings of the earth, which we have quitted and lost sight of—one of us for ever. Are you prepared to die ?”

“ To die ! oh God ! What mean you by those horrid words ?—Oh, Count Scotus, do not trifle with my terrors—I am in fearful alarm—prithee, prithee, put back to land—let me meet my husband's fury, and fall by his hand, rather than linger in this agony of dread !”

“Patience one moment ; it will not last long. Cans’t thou fathom, proud duchess, the depths of that flood ? No ; yet thy bed is ready made in its soft sands. Thou wouldst read the stars ! Ha, ha, ha ! it must then be through the magnifying medium of those waters into which you are about to sink.”

“Alas, alas, there is a frightful tone of truth in your terrible voice—you are not mocking my fears,—I know you are going to murder me—oh, mercy, mercy, Count Scotus ! I have done nought to injure you. What means this purpose ? Tell me, tell me—oh, say that you but sport with my weakness—that you are about to work some powerful charm, some spell for my happiness, and this is but the dreadful preface—the mysterious and awful incantation for the spirit of good you are going to raise—Oh, speak me some comforting words ; turn your face towards me, that I may read your heart !”

The agitated suppliant rose from the bench

and caught the Italian in her arms. He flung her back rudely from him, and exclaimed,

“ Not injured me ! Did you not repulse my passion when I loved you ? Did you not fly in disgust and terror when I wooed you—in mockery it is true, but you knew not that—by the river side ? Do you not now, even when you would twine your arms around me, loathe and fear me ? Are not these wrongs, and do they not merit death ? But without all this you are doomed to die, and by my hand, and in the eddies of this flood—it is written—so prepare !”

He had left the boat to its random course, and fearing that it might drift to the shore, he was resolved to finish the deed at once. He therefore approached the duchess, who lay stunned and almost senseless across the bench, and seizing her round the waist he lifted her up. But the dread of approaching death gave her new strength, and she clung faster to the bench, and screamed aloud in the hoarse hopelessness of succour. A thought flashed across

her mind that seemed to promise a momentary respite from what she now felt to be her inevitable fate.

“ Oh, stop, stop one minute,” cried she, “ but one minute, till I tear off those diamond trappings and give them to you, as a poor reward for a minute more of life.”

“ Foolish wretch !” vociferated the Italian, “ they are as false as is your sex—they are not worth ten ducats. Know as you perish that I have had all of you worth having, in the real jewels which those counterfeits replaced—and now to finish with you !”

“ Mercy, mercy !” uttered the choking voice of the duchess.

“ Death, death !” responded the villain. “ Hast thou ever known me for such a fool as to dream of my letting you live, that I might die ? of allowing you to proclaim your own justification and brand me with infamy ?”

“ Oh, fear not that I shall reveal anything,” cried the duchess, in new hope of touching him

with compassion—"I swear eternal secrecy—I will bury myself out of sight of the whole world—I will tear my tongue out, if you but spare my life."

"The dead only tell no tales," was the villain's reply; and at length worn out by the struggle, she offered no resistance to his attempt to raise her up, but a low panting cry of supplication which he heeded not. He lifted her in his arms, and just as he stooped towards the boat-side to plunge her into the stream, a bounding spring from the other end made the frail vessel heave to and fro, and the murderer lost his balance, ere he could effect the deed. A loud shout close to his ear accompanied a powerful blow which felled him to the floor. He sprang up again, and found himself assailed by two men, whose furious voices he recognised for those of Sweinishen and Von Heyen. They each seized on him, and by a sudden heave they lifted him bodily up and flung him right over the side, striking him repeated blows

on the head with their clenched fists, to force him from the convulsive grasp with which he still clung to the gunwale. He disappeared. But, with a last desperate clutch he had seized the body of the duchess and dragged her with him into the river's depth. Both instantly sank, her gurgling screams mixing with the oaths and exclamations which broke from the shocked men, who had meant to be her saviours and avengers. With straining eyes and out-stretched arms they watched, for some seconds of fearful suspense. At last the white-robed body of the duchess rose to the surface, and almost close to the ready hand of Von Heyen.

“God be praised ! I have her !” exclaimed he, making a grasp ; but a portion of the fragile garment tore away from the hapless wearer, and she sank again. A cry of agony broke from the brave young man, who without a moment's consideration of his own danger sprang into the river, and dived in the direction where she had disappeared. Von Sweinishen had

now to support the sole burthen of agitated suspense. He held the oar in both hands, afraid to move it lest he might propel the boat to the place where he hoped the bold swimmer at least would rise again, and thus cause him the risk of a stunning blow against the keel or side. In a few seconds he appeared, and though he spoke not, and that the darkness prevented his anxious comrade from seeing any certainty of his success, it was evident, from the striking out of only one of his arms in the water, that he held some heavy substance in the other below the surface.

“Heaven grant you have not missed the lady and brought up the murderer!” cried Von Sweinishen fervently—but the nearly exhausted swimmer dared not open his mouth to reply, lest the water should rush in and take his breath entirely away.

Von Sweinishen saw it was impossible without imminent risk of upsetting the skiff to attempt to lift in his friend or the person he

held; so, the moment Von Heyen approached sufficiently near to the side to grasp the gunwale with his unencumbered hand, he worked lustily with the oar, and in a few minutes succeeded in reaching the shore just as his companion's strength had almost failed him, and as he dreaded that he should be forced either to relinquish the hold of the boat's side or let go the object he upheld with the other hand.

“Which is it?” cried Von Sweinishen, rushing from the stern, as the boat buried its prow into the soft bank.

“The duchess, the duchess!” replied Von Heyen, sinking on the rushy sedge, and with a last faint effort dragging up the body beside him.

“Then, the villain, thank God, has perished ! What a blessed chance that made me recognise him, and then meet you that you might follow him with me !”

“And how fortunate that his own cloak served to conceal us, where we lay down in the

boat while he sought his intended victim in the hut !”

“ And that we can testify to her innocence from the ruffian’s own last words ! Ah, Von Heyen, Providence is great and good !”

“ God grant, then, that the princess still lives !”

The fisherman and his wife, who had lingered on the beach, attracted by the fearful shrieks of the duchess, the shouts of her deliverers, and the complicated noises of the tumult, now gave every help to remove the drenched and corpse-like body into the house, and to seek immediate remedies for an attempt to restore it to sensibility.

CHAPTER V.

AN interval of between three and four years from those principal events of our story passed over, with scenes and circumstances more publicly important, but not so minutely interesting to the personages whose adventures we relate. Individual doings were merged in the general progress of affairs, involving more or less the fortune and the fate of almost every one of those whom we have brought forward in the foregoing pages; and we must, in a brief sketch of the political occurrences of the epoch, abandon for a while the more detailed attention which we have before given to persons and events.

The conversion to protestantism, and the

marriage of Ghebhard Truchses, the former of which he boldly avowed, and the latter being long suspected and at length made public, were looked upon as a joint event, in the religious and political aspect which they presented to the empire and to Europe ; and, from the imperial to the papal throne, the agitation they produced was almost without parallel. The splendid talents of the elector-archbishop and the influence of his ancient and powerful family made his defection from the catholic church a matter of no common importance, for it was impossible to confound such a man with the herd of princes who had abjured the doctrines of Rome, or of the prelates who had insisted on their right of marrying, yet still retaining their mitres and their sees.

Thirty years previously, Herman, Count de Weid, one of Ghebhard's predecessors in the electoral and archiepiscopal see of Cologne, had been deprived of his dignities by the authority of a papal bull, and had quietly resigned them

rather than plunge his country into war. His only offence was the countenance he had given to the Lutheran heresy. But Truchses, who had gone much further, was not thought likely to resign his rank, unless actually overpowered by material force ; and the combinations entered into for his destruction were on a scale proportioned to his probable resistance, while the efforts which he made to sustain his authority and defend his possessions justified those calculations.

The question which now arose was, on political grounds, one of considerable intricacy. Notwithstanding the reservations in favour of the catholics which had been introduced into the religious peace, the protestants still possessed many bishoprics throughout the empire, and the present case could not be considered as exactly within those reservations, as it did not concern the election of a new prelate, but of one who had abandoned the catholic doctrines and still claimed to maintain his authority. The

example of Truchses, if unresisted, was too inviting not to be certainly followed by other ecclesiastics. It also placed the laity of the catholic church in an extremely critical position, partly on account of the situation of the archiepiscopal states and partly from the predominancy the protestants would thereby gain in the electoral college. It was especially feared, as freedom of opinion was every day spreading rapidly, that Mayence would be the next to follow the example. Much, therefore, as Ghebhard and his friends endeavoured to represent his conduct as an individual case, which could draw after it no consequences, it was perfectly well known that many canons were avowed protestants, and that nothing would be easier than gradually to fill the chapter with their adherents, while a certainty would arise, that no catholic would ever again be elected.

These considerations would in any event have been serious, but would not have aroused such fierce and inveterate hostility to Ghebhard, had

he not chosen this critical moment to marry. There is no doubt but that he was inclined at first, knowing he would be exposed to the attacks of his chapter, the emperor, the pope, and the whole catholic empire, to adopt the resolution of at once resigning and retiring altogether into private life. His declaration to Nuenar, on the day of his marriage, showed that such was his first impulse. But the hope of support from the protestants, who at that time disputed every privilege with their antagonists, an innate love of authority, which those who have long enjoyed it are so little able to resign, the example of many bishops and archbishops of the empire who had married with impunity, the persuasion of his protestant friends, particularly Nuenar and Kriecklingen, and perhaps more than all, the feeling of what he owed to his beloved Agnes herself, triumphed over all objections and scruples, and fixed him in the determination of maintaining his archbishopric.

The state of feeling throughout the electorate at that time contributed, no doubt, to confirm him in this resolution. Devoted as were the burgomaster and council of Cologne to the catholic religion, the infection of the protestant doctrines had yet spread extensively among the people. Many citizens had already, some months previously, presented a petition to the emperor, that they might be allowed the free exercise of worship. They had obtained nothing further by this step than that the protestant princes, in a memorial of their own, strongly recommended their cause to the council. As this received no immediate answer, the palatine John of Zweibrucken had been commissioned to go personally to Cologne, and make representations in favour of the citizens. The council replied with much firmness, and was not to be prevailed on either by threats or persuasions to grant their demand. It nevertheless gave liberty to those who had been imprisoned for attending the sermons of protestant

preachers; and in consequence the fanatic ranter Scragglekopft, alluded to in our early chapters, with others of his stamp, had been preparing for a rich harvest of heresy. The Elector Ghebhard, who wished nothing more ardently than to increase his party in the city, did not even after the success of the revolt against his authority give up all hope from that quarter. He flattered himself that the protestants, imitating the example of the inhabitants of Aachen, would, by the next session of the council, bring some of their own persuasion among them, or perhaps get the entire administration of the city into their hands by force. But, put on their guard by this example, the council redoubled its vigilance, and determined with so much the more zeal upon excluding the party of Ghebhard from the chapter.

Long, however, would the chapter itself have remained irresolute in this delicate affair, if the elector had not entirely thrown off the mask, and declared in a public rescript, almost imme-

diately after his marriage, that, “ as God had delivered him from the darkness of popery, he permitted to all his subjects the public exercise of the reformed religion.” Upon this, the canons assembled together, and called out loudly for a diet at Cologne. And this not only took place, in spite of the active opposition of Ghebhard, but it was also unanimously resolved that the innovation introduced by the single authority of the elector was to be regarded as a measure, which he, without the consent and concurrence of the chapter and states, had no lawful competence to authorize. The states of the electoral lands of Westphalia did not, it is true, join in this resolution; on the contrary, they declared themselves formally for Ghebhard. Nevertheless, the affair took a much more serious turn than he had anticipated; for the emperor and the pope began now to espouse the cause of the chapter with great warmth and energy.

The emperor, willing in the first instance

either to compromise with Truchses, or to give a show of moderation to his conduct had sent, as Ghebhard's defection from the church of Rome became flagrant, a member of his own privy council, to represent to him in the strongest manner the consequences which his conduct would produce; and as this measure remained without effect, the vice-chancellor of the empire, Jacob Kurtz, was dispatched to Bonn with the same views. He prevailed as little with the elector as the former agent, but his presence worked powerfully on the chapter of Cologne, now left almost entirely to the control of the catholic members. The latter, imitating the example of Ghebhard who had garrisoned the city of Bonn, made also every warlike preparation, and got many places into their possession: and all this was not only approved of by Kurtz, but he advised them further, "before all things to think of a new election, for which the chapter was not only competent by their common right, but also by virtue of the ecclesiastical reserva-

tions in the religious peace ; that nothing would more discourage Ghebhard and strengthen the party of the chapter than such a measure ; and that this would be more particularly the case, if the election should fall on some potent prince." The pope, on his side, neglected nothing to bring the affair to an end. After he had without effect warned the elector, by a solemn admonitory letter from his purpose, he declared him excommunicated as a public heretic, and deposed from the archbishopric of Cologne, with its appertaining titles, offices, and dignities. Hereupon the chapter proceeded to confirm the election, so hastily and illegally made in the first instance by the town council, of Ernest of Bavaria, bishop of Liege.

Nothing now remained to Ghebhard but the support of his new adherents, the protestant princes, nearly all of whom had given him hopes and promises, but none more than the palatine, John Casimir, so famous for his zeal in the reformed cause. This prince sent him word

that he would hazard land and people, life and limb in his defence, and that he would recommend his cause in the most emphatic manner to all his relations and connexions, to Queen Elizabeth and to the protestant cantons of Switzerland. Three temporal electors also wrote to the emperor in his favour, and immediately afterwards sent members of their respective privy councils to that imperial court, who declared in the names of their masters—"that Germany would be exposed to great danger if it should come to a war, on which many unquiet and discontented spirits had long reckoned; that the Prince of Parma was already prepared and anxious to send troops out of the Netherlands to interfere in the quarrel, by which not only the Brabant war would be introduced into Germany, but such a mistrust would take place between the states of the empire that no one would know in what light he should regard his neighbour, or on what party he could rely in the fluctuations of a religious and civil contest;

that the emperor was informed of the ferments which had already arisen in the Imperial Diet, and that whatever party this diet might espouse, nothing could ensue but a civil war, confusion, devastation and ruin." The emperor was therefore prayed to be pleased to issue mandates, that foreign troops might be forbidden to violate the German territory, that both the elector and the chapter might refrain from all proceedings against each other, and especially that the latter might be obliged to restore to the elector whatever it had already taken from him."

The emperor replied that an assembly of electors and princes of both religions should be summoned to consider the matter, but that as the excommunications and depositions of the bishop—which regarded not his electoral and temporal but merely his ecclesiastical dignities and offices—had already taken place; and as the election, confirmation and deposition of bishops did not belong to his prerogative, he must decline, as far as those questions were

concerned, taking any part in a matter beyond his competence.

The most exasperating point to the protestants in this whole controversy was that the pope should have taken upon himself, by his sole authority, to depose and degrade so distinguished a hierarch who had espoused their doctrines. "It was," they declared, "a thing unheard-of, and would form a most dangerous precedent, if the pope, without the knowledge of the emperor or the concurrence of the other temporal and ecclesiastical electors, could according to his pleasure depose an elector from his dignity. The whole constitution of the empire would be thereby most sensibly weakened, and the pope would acquire a power which he might employ to crush the emperor himself and all the other orders and members of the Germanic states."

It was, in fact, a prevalent opinion in former times, that a bishop, deposed by the pope did not cease to be a prince of the empire, and

that this last dignity could only be taken from him by the emperor and other states conjointly. We have the clearest example of this in the attempted depositions of the Archbishops of Treves and Cologne by Pope Eugene IV. for their adherence to the Council of Basil. But the Emperor Rudolph determined to confine himself within the provisions and articles of the religious peace, and to make these the rules of his conduct.

Rudolph was in no hurry to summon the promised assembly. He probably thought that the new archbishop, Ernest of Bavaria, who was making ample preparation for war, would soon drive Ghebhard out of the whole archbishopric, and thus make an end of the dispute. The other princes, the two electors, Augustus of Saxony, and John George of Brandenburg, the Margrave Joachim Frederick of Brandenburg, the Elector-palatine Louis, Duke Julius of Brunswick, Duke Ulrick of Mecklenburg, and the Duke of

Wurtemberg, showed themselves much more indifferent than in the beginning it was thought they would. Ghebhard, rousing the whole energy of his nature for the struggle he had resolved on, despite the superstitious conviction of failure which from the first had oppressed him, strove in vain to excite their zeal and procure their active support. They seemed by no means disposed to render him any essential aid.

But, at about this time, Henry IV. of France sent an envoy, Pardillon de Segur, into Germany, not only to effect a closer union among the protestants, but also to exert himself among the German princes in favour of Ghebhard. "The whole of Germany, and a great part of Europe," said he, by this envoy, "have their eyes fixed on what is passing at Cologne. Should the contest terminate in the triumph of Ghebhard, all the well-disposed for the protestant religion would be encouraged thereby; but should the electoral dignity be

trodden under foot by the pope, all brave hearts would lose their confidence, and other electors would be frightened from imitating the bold example which Ghebbhard had given them; that another so good an occasion of encountering the papacy and expelling it altogether from Germany might never again occur; and that the present opportunity must therefore be seized with all possible alacrity and diligence." It was, in fact, Henry's opinion that if the cause of Ghebbhard could be maintained, no catholic, and especially no member of the House of Austria, would ever again mount the imperial throne.

These reasonings were excellent, but they produced no results. The Palatine John Casimir *alone* at last took the field with a newly-levied body of troops, and arrived, in spite of the imperial mandate, in the country of Cologne. It was his object to reduce this city to terms, at all hazards; but although he twice visited the opposite market-town Duitz

with fire and sword, he was unable to undertake anything further. Ghebhard was to have furnished him with money, ammunition, and provisions; but baffled on all hands and being unable to do this effectually, John Casimir, after a few useless marches quitted the country. His brother Louis, the elector-palatine, dying a short time after, and leaving him the guardianship of his children, and the administration of the electorate, a decent pretext was thus afforded him for abandoning the cause of Ghebhard altogether.

At about this time, the long-promised assembly, which consisted of deputies from Metz, Treves, Saxony, and Brandenburg, came to decisions so little in his favour, that even Saxony and Brandenburg advised him to resign his pretensions, and accept of a pension for life.

In the mean time the new Archbishop Ernest had collected troops from Bavaria under the command of his brothers, Duke William

and Ferdinand ; and at length Alexander Farnese, the great Prince of Parma, the general of Philip the Second's troops in the low countries, sent a reinforcement of 3,500 men to the cause of bigotry, led by the Count of Aremberg. To cope with those assailants, Ghebhard raised bodies of recruits in Westphalia, in addition to the mercenaries who remained faithful to his cause as long as he had money to satisfy their cravings. Nuenar was the chief leader of his army in the field, while his brother Charles held firm the possession of Bonn, the stronghold of the elector's hopes. Several affairs took place in various quarters of the electorate ; but it was soon demonstrated that the cause of Ghebhard was hopeless. One by one, as has been stated, his friends dropped off from his support ; nor did the more powerful potentates who might have most sympathized with him attempt anything effectual for his relief. The harsh and selfish Elizabeth of England was too remote as well as too callous

to mix in a quarrel so foreign to her own interests. While Henry IV. of France, the prince who in many of his qualities most resembled our hero, found himself too deeply involved in domestic difficulties to venture a direct interference by arms in favour of the friend who excited so much of his sympathy.

Circumstances were too powerfully hostile to allow Truchses a chance of success. Of this he did not complain; for it has been seen he expected nothing better, and he had perhaps earlier submitted to inevitable fate, had he not been goaded on to the desperation of resistance by the abounding treacheries of many of those adherents he relied on most, who owed him large debts of gratitude and affection, and who at this crisis of his fortunes abandoned him, in all the tortuous varieties of sordid treachery. It took the most dissimulating and in some instances the most invidious forms. Insult in the shape of advice was offered on one hand, while affected compassion was the cloak for

slander on the other. Every fault was magnified, every merit distorted. When the vulgar have once broken from him whom in prosperity they cringed to and fawned on, their persecution is proportionably vile. When they have a really well-founded reproach to make, no mercy is shown. When there is no just cause, they invent. And if they are too cowardly or too dull to do that, they insinuate and hint, say nothing positive, imply much—and, taking a merit for forbearance, absolutely cheat the world out of an approbation for their reserve, which is in fact a meanness more base than direct calumny. How many a reputation has been shrugged, and winked, and hemmed-and-hawed away!

The congress, though not going the absolute length of Ghebhard's persecutors, proved themselves so decidedly hostile to his cause that those among his first abettors who even yet kept up a show of attachment to him, now haughtily insisted that he should resign his

claims, and accept of an imperial pension for his life. This proposal he peremptorily refused. Even with a certainty of ruin he scorned a compromise, the terms of which bore attaint to his honour. There is a glorious obstinacy in man's nature that revolts against dictation. Even when philosophy whispers submission, pride vociferates resistance ; for the proud man will rather die than yield to bullying, even in a cause which conscience tells him to be unjust. This is not reason perhaps, but it is human nature. We are only stating a failing, not defending a fault. Nor is it to be understood that our hero came within the sweep of the censure it may merit. He believed himself to be in the right. The reader may speculate on what had been his probable course supposing him to have felt otherwise.

The latest struggles of Ghebhard Truchses against his hard destiny were the most vigorous. Every attack from his open enemies, every defection of his false friends were met by some

new effort of ingenuity and courage ; and he would probably have gone on in single-handed resistance till he dropped dead in the contest, had not one of those unpropitious events which happened in all the simplicity of accidental occurrence been at once magnified by his superstition into a direct omen from Heaven, decisive of his ruin. Against it, reason, philosophy and fortitude were as sand before the desert blast. Conviction in an invincible ill-luck paralyzed the whole moral force of the man, and scattered the remnant of his withering hopes. His last and only chance of holding out, till by some possible turn of fate the political state of Europe might replace him in his almost lost possessions, was in the firmness of his brother Charles and the fidelity of the garrison of Bonn, which he had so long and so ably commanded. The communication between that city and the elector's castle of Godesberg, on the same side of the Rhine, was constantly kept open, Ghebhard's residence having been for

some time fixed in the latter beautiful retreat, whence he not only commanded a free intercourse with his capital and the district still his own on the left bank of the river, but from the towers and terraces of which their mistress—she so long lost to the wide world, yet happy to find one of her own in those restricted limits—could send forth her anxious looks, to repose on the not distant beauties of the seven mountains, and to span the glorious stream which separated her from their romantic solitudes.

The elector made constant visits, during the intervals from active operations, to his now wavering capital, to encourage the soldiery, and by every effort of ingenuity uphold the almost worn-out fidelity of the citizens. The Bavarian troops were now preparing to lay regular siege to Bonn. They had taken up a position at the opposite of the Rhine, and a constant cannonade was interchanged between the batteries from either bank. It was a matter of great risk to venture between Godesberg and

Bonn ; but the elector's visits at this crisis were more frequent than ever, for an example of courage and activity was more than ever necessary. One morning he had ridden through a heavy fire along the river's side, and safely entered the small house in the suburbs where his brother Charles had taken up his quarters the previous day, for the better superintendence of the works going on ; and where, fatigued by a night of anxiety and exertion, he reposed on a couch, while against the wall close beside, his sword hung suspended in his studded baldrick.

“ Ha, Ghebhard ! ” exclaimed he, half raising himself up. “ Welcome, and well come, my brother ! I wanted thy counsel in respect to those new batteries, and the construction of the rafts for attacking the enemy's works. Thou must have encountered sore chances of mishap on the way. There was no dust to cover thee thus, if a Bavarian bullet had not ploughed the road close by. Was it so ? ”

“ Why yes, in truth, an uncivil shot did

rake the earth below, while another lopped the elm branches above me, so near that had my mitre held place of this close casque I do believe its tip at least had been taken off."

"Thou would'st not have liked the omen, Ghebhard, eh? Or say, have the manifold wild chances of late years taught thee the little worth of signs and tokens?"

"The experience of late years Charles has taught me a low estimate of man, but in nothing shaken my high views of Heaven. No hint of prophecy or supernatural sign is now required to warn me of the little worth of human nature. Yet should Heaven condescend to hold forth manifest marks by which life's voyage may be steered, such as on more than one occasion have already been vouchsafed to me, I am as open to their influence as ever I was."

"Alas, my brother, the times and late events are rife with such. When enemies close in on us and friends drop off, when the ranks

are broken and the battle lost, no ominous portent is needed to tell us of our fate !”

“ Thou, Charles, seest fate with a soldier’s eye and meetest it foot to foot and hand to hand. With thee it walks the earth in an incarnate form. I seek for it in heaven. It is to me a spirit of the skies, seen in a high remoteness, manifest in stars and meteors, walking the winds, careering o’er the seas, enwrapped in clouds, glittering in sunbeams, whispering to man in dreams, meeting his thoughts on their soul-searching path, and startling them with flashes of conviction. Or it is visible at times in accidental things, unlooked for, out of calculation, in themselves trifles, bubbles that burst in nothingness on the broad air, but even in the drop that forms them holding the essence of eternal truth, wisdom’s sure oracle for those who can propound it. Such has been, such is, my notion of destiny—thus I will read it and abide by it.”

“ And long may Heaven grant thy noble

nature fair hope of happiness!" exclaimed Charles, seizing his brother's hand and pressing it affectionately between his own. "By God's thunder it is almost as glorious as a well-won fight to mark the enthusiasm of thy genius, even when one feels it goes too far and too fast! My noble brother, how I love thee! How proud I am of thy talents, how thy eloquence thrills through me as though it were a part of myself! I am cast in a ruder mould—I know not the nice touches of fine fancy—My nerves are sluggish and not easily set tingling. I look on a shooting star or blazing comet as of less moment to the world's fate than a bullet sent from a cannon's fiery throat. But I am all alive to your fine qualities of head and heart. I never fawned on nor flattered your prosperity, Ghebhard; but now in these sad times of trial, I am thine, my brother, body and soul, for life or death—and may God forsake me the day that I abandon thee!"

The honest soldier, overpowered by sudden

emotion, let his head sink back on the rolled-up cloak which served for a pillow, and he covered his face with both hands. Ghebhard, deeply affected, but commanding his feelings, replied,

“While thou art spared to me, my gallant brother, with *her*, my heart's hope, the balm of my soul's wounds—I am well, too well repaid for all the paltry losses of life. No, Charles, thou art not of those who load with flattery him whom they would deceive, like the reptile which slavers over before swallowing its prey. Thou ever stoodst aloof till the hour of danger came upon me, and grievous it is to me that the hazard of my fortunes is all that is left to recompense thee for all the advantages of trust and power, flung at the emperor's feet, to leave thee free to follow a cause where nought could pay the sacrifice.”

“Yes, Ghebhard, yes, there was and is great honour and much glory to be gained—and I have gained it. To bear thee up against thy foes—to give thy slanderers the lie—to smite

thy enemies—to conquer with thee if I can, to die defending thee, if it must be so, to share thy fate of good or ill, that be my recompense—I scorn all other !”

A fast embrace followed these words. The holiest spirit of brotherhood inspired the manly pair. Ghebhard was the first to speak.

“ This pays me for all ills—I am now quits with the world ! With thy arm Charles, to fight for me, I may conquer—with thy heart to feel with me, I must triumph. All will be well ! As long as thy good sword is wielded in my cause, I am invincible !”

As Ghebhard uttered these words, he fixed his eyes on the rapier hanging on its nail before him ; and at the moment he ceased speaking, a chance bullet from one of the enemy’s batteries struck the house, burst through the frail wall, and passing over Ghebhard’s head where he sat, cut the baldrick right across, and the rapier fell clattering on the floor, with a cloud of dust shaken from the stone and

mortar where the round-shot made its lodgment.

The brothers started up. Charles, a true soldier, sprang to seize his fallen sword. Ghebhard stood transfixed; and when the former turned to mark if he was quite safe from this untoward interruption, he saw him, pale, his eyes wild staring, his mouth half open, every feature of his expressive face showing the condensed suffering which had seized and cramped his heart. Charles knew well the mixed strength and weakness of his brother's character. He felt that a word in his present state of feeling would be intolerable to him. He therefore stood silent till the crisis passed over. He watched intently the returning colour stealing to Ghebhard's cheeks, his eyes recovering their wonted softness, the rigid attitude gradually relaxing. He then cautiously took one of his hands in his, and looked full in his face, without even then venturing to speak to him. Ghebhard felt the

whole process of his brother's assiduous delicacy, as much as if it had been eloquently spoken. He embraced him tenderly ; and, in such tones of solemn seriousness as always accompanied his feelings of superstitious awe, he said,

“ God bless and protect thee, my dear brother, and grant we may meet again—that this said foretelling of my ruin may not involve thee in my fate ! I must hasten to Godesberg—that is now my post—I leave everything to thy dauntless energy—farewell !”

Charles replied not. He was quite overcome by the solemnity of his brother's despairing yet heroic aspect, words, and voice. In a few minutes more, Ghebhard was again on horseback, and on his road to the river's side towards Godesberg ; indifferent to the bullets, which at intervals passed almost as near to him as those which he had already miraculously escaped on that eventful morning.

CHAPTER VI.

FAR-LOOKING from one of the castle-turrets, Agnes had, as usual, taken her station, to watch for the return of her husband ; and long before the expected hour for his arrival, her anxiety told her that the time was near at hand. The dull reverberations sweeping up the river spoke, in each successive sound, of the dangers which Ghebhard might be exposed to, and the awful proofs of the near neighbourhood of war had never before sounded so frequently or so awfully on her ear, nor been so sadly echoed in her heart. She at length saw him approach—slowly, but safely. She flew from the casemate

of the tower, that solitary tower which still remains to mark the site of her first years of wedded life, and she was quickly out from its low postern, and half way down the low mound it stands on, to receive into her open arms him for whose dispersed and shattered thoughts her breast was the sure haven.

Struck by the unwonted seriousness of his looks, which not even the beams of her glowing countenance could light up, the dread of some positive calamity kept her for a moment dumb. But, recovering herself, she exclaimed,

“Tell it to me, my beloved, fearlessly and at once. I am long prepared for all ill news—but none can be fatal, since thou art back with me again. What has happened? Is our dear Charles safe?”

“Heaven grant! I left him well and unharmed not an hour past. No, my own Agnes—my own! thou art still mine own, mine only, wholly, and for ever! Yes, it is so—and being thus, is aught else on earth save that invaluable

brother worth a thought? No, my Agnes, no positive mischief has happened to day, nought that to vulgar eyes or usual feelings might give evidence of harm. But I have marked a sign and token of ill luck, as surely as the carousing king of old saw the fiery writing on the wall. The days of my power are numbered, and its final extinction is at hand. Those of my happiness are but beginning; for to love thee rightly, to possess thee thoroughly, I must be left destitute of all but thy incomparable virtue, thy magic beauty, thy abounding wisdom. And soon, my Agnes, will those treasures be my sole possession. Oh, God, how much more worth than all the rest!"

"Come in, my best beloved, come in and rest and refresh thyself—then thou wilt tell me thy adventure, which may promise good instead of ill. Omens may have two meanings, and thou art not prone to see the dark side of things."

"The broad glare of day never wears night's

blackness, my own Agnes ; nor do signs of ill borrow the sun's brightness. *They* have but one colour, and the more sanguine my mind on general events, the more sure my perception of each token of mishap.

“ Well then, my Ghebhard, let the mischief come, and let us meet it bravely, be it what it may ! I am too long prepared, too long expectant for the worse, to be taken by surprise or in default of courage. Come in, come in ! ”

It was thus that Agnes was wont to yield to her husband's weaknesses, and to turn them into strength ; letting the first impression work uncontradicted, or but slightly checked by some neutralizing remark and finally turned into a different channel. He folded his arms round her waist, and was entering with her the low portal which led to her private apartments, when one of the officers who attended him from the lower terrace on the court-yard, where he had alighted from his horse, advanced and said, that a messenger who had just passed the draw-

bridge, demanded in all haste to communicate news from Count Nuenar.

"Bad news," replied Ghebhard, in a prophetic tone.

"I fear it will prove so, for it is the first time I have heard your highness forbode ill since the day the war began."

"I felt, though I refrained from foreboding it, and I now only echo the croaking voice of destiny, my worthy follower. Let the messenger advance! Well, good sir," continued Ghebhard, as the dust-covered officer approached, his countenance betraying his intelligence, "Count Nuenar is defeated?"

"Alas, your highness, yes!—utterly defeated by Duke William of Bavaria."

"Not slain?"

"No, he yet lives, and was even unhurt when I left the fatal field close by the Isselt's banks."

"Heaven be praised! for he has stood well and gallantly to my cause when almost all the

rest dropped off; and he may now abandon it with honour. Captain, you will find good cheer, though there be small comfort in that now, at the hands of my household officers. I will see you anon to learn the details of your message—you have told me a sad text on which to preach a sermon of serious thought.”

“How changed his highness is !” observed the captain, as the elector retired. “I remember a far different reception to this for him who brought the news of the fight of Wachenheim two months back. The elector then cried ‘victory !’ before he heard the word ‘defeat,’ and his questions came so fast and open-mouthed, as to din my comrade Captain Kleinsmit, while his eye caught, as it were, each answer ere it left the man’s brain. Say, gentlemen what has come over his highness to transform him thus ?”

The courtiers gave nothing but shrugs and gestures of entire ignorance to the blunt soldier’s inquiries ; and at best but a loose-dropped monosyllable to those which followed, as they

repaired to the chamber where he was told to await the elector's summons. While he learned this lesson of courtly caution; and marvelled much at the overstrained air of haughty condescension which was worn by every one around him—it was his first visit to the anti-room of a palace—Ghebhard and Agnes had reached the retired apartments occupied by her, and commanding that extensive view of nature's loveliness before alluded to. Once there, and quite shut out from the observation of his retainers, he spoke without reserve; and slightly glancing at the news of Nuenar's defeat, which seemed scarcely to affect, and by no means to surprise him, he related to Agnes the event of the morning relative to his brother's sword.

“And thou readest in this accident a prognostic of ill?” said Agnes.

“By God's truth, aye! or methinks, my Agnes, I must have lost all power of reading,” replied Ghebhard, with an astonished look at the doubt implied in the question.

“Thou mayest be right, fatally right,” re-

turned Agnes, "but it seems to me as though the weapon was struck from its idle place by that chance shot, in warning that it should be grasped firmly in thy brave brother's hand, and turned in active energy against the foe."

"I wish Charles had taken it thus!" said Truchses with a thoughtful air—"but he despises omens altogether—or good or ill, they neither help nor harm him."

"Would that thou mightest take them thus!" said Agnes, in a tone of affectionate but quite unreproachful sincerity.

"I could not even if I would," replied Truchses. "From earliest life my feelings have chimed in with the prevalent belief. My childhood was nurtured in romance; and as I grew in years and intellect those early impressions became a part of me. Without the poetry of thought—for such is superstition—I had been nothing—or worse than nothing, a mortal clod doing life's functions, but without life's grace or dignity. I had suffered less

perhaps, but I enjoyed nothing. The world had been to me a common-place probation, instead of what I feel God meant it for, a scene of ever-new delight. Imagination gilding fact, embellishes what is coarse, ennobles what is refined. Even if it cheats us with ideal excellence, it is all to our own good. Better to revel in bright delusion than rot in dull reality! How beautiful to believe in providential signs, and see them act for individual objects! How elevating to man's nature to feel that he is tended by a world of beings, purer than thought can frame a notion of—to think that the beacon-lights of heaven are linked to us by an ethereal essence, formed of myriad millions of bright rays filling the empyrean, which *seems* space but is one vast connexion between earth and sky. Oh, Agnes! I have gazed upon that host of living fires at times until my senses reeled in delirious wonder. I have seen those stars dance in wild mazes; have thought that they poured down on me a diamond shower;

again that they flew upwards like sparks from some burning mass ; aye, that, uplifted from the solid earth, I moved on viewless wings to mingle with their splendours — Ah ! thanks for this kind hint. I lose myself in thought, and tire thee with my rhapsody ?”

“ No, no, go on !” said Agnes, with a plaintive smile, and pressing the hand into which she had softly slipped one of her’s, whose gentle touch had brought her enthusiast husband back from his far flight—“ Go on ; thou knowest I love to hear thee thus, to mark thee, half inspired, borne far above mere mortal feelings.”

“ Yet still, mine own one, instantly lured back by thy timid touch. Oh, Agnes, this *is* heaven on earth ; for at such times I know not which to think it mere human happiness or immortal bliss.”

“ Then may I not be satisfied, even when thy lofty fancy bears thee away and seems o’er-dazzled by the beam it soars to meet ? I am, I am, my husband ?”

“Thou may’st indeed be so, my Agnes, if my deep love is worth thy having.”

“If!”

“I know all that is comprised in that eloquent word, my best and dearest! and thus I answer it,” said the anxious elector, tenderly embracing his wife. “Yes,” continued he, as he held her close to him, and gazed fervidly into her blushing face, “it was to this temperament, so warm, so fancy-fraught that was owing the first enchantment that led me to adore thee. Had I not believed in destiny, I had not listened to the arch-devil who worked so hard for my happiness, while he only meant my ruin—I had not rushed into that passion which lives to-day, more ardent than when, after my first sight of thee, I left the little heart, enclosed in the fanciful case, which has been ever since worn next thy own.”

“Not ever since that night, only since thy confession told me whence it came, and that I knew it for a sure emblem of thine.”

“That discovery followed quick upon our first meeting—I lost no time in wooing, Agnes. Say, hast thou never marvelled at the rapid course of our attachment? never felt it was too sudden and too soon complete? And art thou satisfied indeed, my own Agnes, with the fate I have brought on thee? wilt thou not murmur and repent when ruin stares us still closer in the face, and we are driven out at length on the wide world, desolate, friendless and forsaken?”

“Oh, stop—this is blasphemy against love’s holiness—and most harsh injustice to thyself. And dost thou think so meanly of thy power as to believe it can be shaken by those adverse winds? so lightly of me, as to believe me capable of change? no, my beloved, *thou* art my all, as I know myself to be thine—our fate is the same—and we will run our course, *together* it cannot be said—for we are now but one, in interests, feelings, and fortune.”

“My admirable wife! in every ill my sup-

port, in all good my inspiration ! Was I not right in my rapid choice of thee ? was not fate kind to me ? ought not Scotus to be canonized as my tutelar saint rather than loathed as a fiend ? Let all the rest of the world fling curses on the river's bosom, to keep down his hated spirit where his base body sank, but let me laud his memory, for he was the beacon to light me to thy charms, the pilot to guide me on in their pursuit."

"Let the wretch be disremembered wholly nor think heaven works its purposes of good by such vile instruments. The association thou wouldst establish is dishonouring to a being like thee. And it is my repugnance to mark thee so willing to mix thy fate with ignoble things, or trifling accidents, that makes me wish thou wert as Charles is, free from the superstition which though brilliantly colouring thy general character, taints it at times too broadly."

"'Tis thus, and almost only thus, we differ,

my Agnes. Thou see'st in trifling and mean causes only trifles and meanness. I mark them often as the manifestations of glorious purposes—as when the electoral 'scutcheon fell on my canon's cap and told me my high destiny—and oftner, alas! of late, as signs of deep and desperate mishap. Am I not justified in my forebodings this day by the sad news of Nuenar's defeat? But that I fear is nought to what will surely come. The approaching shadow of some mighty mischief falls broadly o'er my spirit—I see it coming but I shrink not. I am ready for my avoidless doom; and did it not equally involve thee, Agnes, I could rush into ruin with the fervour of a martyr plunging into flames!”

“There can be no ruin for either of us, my husband, while this mutual affection lasts. Nor does worldly ill contain one terror for me, but the possible chance of losing thy love.”

“That is *not* possible while reason lives, the very thought of it makes me shudder, for ere

thou couldst cease to reign as at present in my heart reason must quit my brain. Oh, Agnes, I have loved thee largely but not madly—to cease to love thee as I do were indeed madness, for art thou not to me everything! are not thy solid judgement and firm virtue the ballast that keeps steady our life-bark on its stormy course, while my more buoyant energy forms the sails? Are we not well mated? Could any other living woman have suited me a thousandth part so well? How well hast thou borne my foibles! Hast thou ever looked a reproach, or thwarted one wayward wish which might lead me at times astray? Oh never, never! Then must I love thee till my heart's pulses cease to throb; for the strong instinct of my own happiness is confirmed and sanctified by reason, reflection, and experience.”

* * * * *

Such scenes as these were of frequent occurrence between Ghebhard Truchses and his wife, during the course of the four years which had

elapsed since the more busy details of our story already presented to the reader. The whole progress of their wedded intercourse had been an increase of affection on both sides, and of passionate delight on his. The impetuous ardour of his character reposed at times, but was never weakened, like some vessel of war that is for awhile inert in harbour, but is ever ready to rush out before the winds into the open seas again. The rapidity of the double conquest which Ghebhard and Agnes had made of each other had, without doubt, carried each too quickly on to allow sufficient time for either to examine calmly and judge certainly of the other's character, or to calculate with precision their mutual chances of happiness. It was decidedly a lottery in which they ventured; and they had amazing good luck to have both drawn prizes.

But, after all, a few weeks or months more or less of courtship is of small matter, if love be really the inspiration and not mere worldly

interests. In all affairs of feeling very much depends on chance. A man in love is never for the time seen in his real aspect. It is the nature of that master-passion to subdue all others ; and it is the necessity of nature, not hypocrisy, that makes the enamoured suitor appear more amiable and generous, less violent and selfish than he really is. And when after marriage he returns to his true character, women too often make small allowance for their own influence before it ; and visit too harshly the sins they discover, in the belief that they were unfairly and treacherously concealed. If men see too much in their mistresses, women expect too much from husbands. . It is rarely that a man finds after marriage more charms than he imagined when wooing ; for the great majority of women are impelled by the desire, neither affected nor unamiable, of displaying their advantages to their lovers. But when a husband does find in his wife qualities of mind that he either overlooked or did not seek for in his

courtship, when his chief object was to show his own merits not to draw out her's, his astonishment is not greater than his delight. He had loved her before for his own sake, he now values her for her's. The selfishness of passion is softened down and sublimed. And as for the great tie of personal attraction, which possession is supposed to loosen, there must be a sad deficiency of sentiment in man or of delicacy in woman when anything but the gradual decay of nature causes that to cease. Female beauty is in itself of long duration ; and the charms which we gaze on daily fade so imperceptibly that their decline is scarcely visible. Even the sunset of passion has abandoning delights, for those who revel in love's warmth rather than in its fire.

Whatever may be the general case, Ghebbard Truchses loved his wife better in all ways the longer he knew her ; and if he was an exception, it is to be hoped there are many others to be found even now. There was something in the

character of Agnes, and that something supremely good, which required the marriage state to develop it thoroughly. She had less vanity and less selfishness than almost any one. She never fancied herself of importance to others, and possessed none literally in her own eyes, until she found that she was united indissolubly to another, and that reason and feeling combined to prove to her that his interests and her own were as one. For him, then, for his fame, his honour, his welfare she grew proud, and to promote his good she was ready for all efforts, though she had despised every exertion for her own. Had she never married she had been the most indolent of women, not from the want of mental activity, but from the absence of personal desires. She was fond of pleasing others, from benevolence rather than vanity. She was more fearful of dispraise than ambitious of display. But a cautiousness of temperament which prompted to retirement, led to a partial veiling of her character, which

gave an air of indifference to what was in fact but an excess of modesty. This excess, like all others even of virtue, was a defect ; and perhaps in her peculiar case, an unfortunate one. More confidence had given more energy ; and she might then have actively aided the struggle which her husband was thrown into. But though she upheld him by her counsel and consoled him by her sympathy, she despised the worldliness of the objects for which he contended, too much to let her be much more than a passive support, against which his ardent and at times exhausted spirit leaned. But it was in this negative capacity that she performed her share in the great drama of his fate, and it is in this aspect that she was as yet a heroine. That title is more commonly accorded to those only who bustle and battle through the world. A great injustice ! For many a being of calm temperament and unobtrusive conduct is at once the inspiration and the sustenance of acts, which but for them would not be heroism. And such

was Agnes de Mansfeldt, and such her conduct for four years of a struggle in which her gallant husband was like the foam on the tossed waters, and she as the far down spring which caused their eternal heave.

The principal portion of those four years was passed in the sumptuous retirement of Godesberg, where after their marriage the elector and his wife fixed their almost constant residence ; the impolicy of a public avowal making Agnes insist on Ghebhard restraining his impetuous desire to proclaim his union in defiance of the world. It was, however, known too well to be at all doubtful ; and his enemies acted as completely on the excuse it gave for their hostility, as though the elector had officially announced it to every court of Europe.

Never did two beings live more thoroughly in and for each other than did Ghebhard and Agnes from the moment they became one. The influence that each at once obtained they kept in daily increasing security. With her it was

a concentration of all feeling, which without weakening her benevolent regard for human nature in general totally absorbed every individual sentiment. She was amply capable of devoted love, but her heart contained only one chamber, and that could hold but one tenant. Truchses was differently organized. He had the power of loving—of largely and sincerely loving—in different degrees, and various persons. *His* heart was honeycombed, and each separate cell was redolent of affection. But as one by one his various attachments were worn out by time, or trampled out by treachery, the place they had occupied was successively filled by some offshoot from that flower of conjugal delight so deeply rooted in his soul. The constant activity which urged him on to variety of pursuits, and which threw him into continual contact with new scenes and new persons, tried to the utmost, and secured the complete triumph of the great experiment he had ventured on. Every new absence brought him back to his

wife, more impassioned, more tender than the last. The irritability of his temper became softened down, the pulse of his ambition throbbed gentler and gentler, he in all things became a better without in any becoming a less brilliant man. Other heroines have had the merit of urging their lovers to triumph gracefully over ill ; Agnes de Mansfeldt's was that of teaching her husband to bear ruin with dignity.

And here is the place to briefly mention the fate of some other persons, more prominent in the opening than in this period of our story.

The unfortunate Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, recovered almost by miracle from the attempt on her life, and completely cleared of every criminal charge by the testimony of her preservers, was thoroughly reinstated in her husband's confidence. But the imprudence of her connexion with Scotus, and the notoriety of the scene with Leckenstein, seemed to call for some admonitory system towards her, that though not exactly punishment was something stronger

than reproof. She was consequently, and quite with her own consent, placed in a separate residence, in her husband's dominions and close to the seat of his sovereign power; where, freed from the embarrassing honours of dominion, for which nature, her own tastes, and preceding circumstances all marked her to be unfitted, she lived in a well-watched privacy, which historians may be amply justified in designating an imprisonment.

Von Leckenstein, whose wounds were healed and whose health restored under the care of his relatives met with a more rigorous fate. The barbarous system of international law which in those days allowed one despot to play into the hands of another, for their common purposes of tyranny, offered, of course, no restraint to the views of princes who only sought and demanded what appeared but rigorous justice against a foreign offender. The unhappy Ulrick was, therefore, seized and carried off by the orders of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, as guilty of a passion for a sovereign

princess, with but slight remonstrance on the part of the Elector of Cologne, who admitted the heinousness of the offence against his brother sovereign's dignity and honour, and whose intercession on the score of the culprit's youth, the failure of his designs, and the sufferings he had already undergone, only procured an alleviation of the horrors of the duration to which he was doomed for the remainder of his life. This was a hard fate for a young and by no means guilty man, whose worst fault had been to suffer vanity to lead him astray from his allegiance, to the girl he loved and who loved him.

Poor Fredolinda, deeply hurt by the evident inconstancy of her ambitious cousin, had, long even before the catastrophe already related and which proclaimed his daring passion for the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg to the world, felt all the torments of slighted affection. She was one of those sensitive creations of which the passions make their sport, without judgment sufficient to restrain her enthusiasm. Jealousy is the almost spontaneous growth of such a mind; and it no

sooner became evident in poor Freda than it sprang into complete development, like the poisonous weed that bursts fully-leaved from the earth. Yet in all her anguish this fine-hearted girl was true to her character of generous affection. She tended her wounded cousin with complete devotion, nor did she shrink from this harrassing duty, even when she heard him in his delirium rave wildly of the rival beauty for whose form he took that of the pale and weeping maiden thus self-doomed to moral martyrdom. This was a hard trial. Freda bore it, and bore it well; but her fortitude arose from the inspiration of a feeling more absorbing, more elevating and more consoling than even love itself. It was religious fervour that had completely seized on her mind and held her in its exciting thrall. Enough was seen of her disposition at the opening scene of this story to show that all her fancies chimed with the elaborate pomps of the Roman Catholic worship. And fortunate it was for her inno-

cent heart that such vanities had power to at once control and console it. How far better to live pure and happy, the votary of a delusion, than linger on the victim of a feeling formed of realities of suffering, and a vague notion of enjoyments she was not doomed to experience, even had she known how to value them. Left almost entirely to herself, in consequence of her father's constant absence in the duties of his command in the electoral army, Freda found no obstacle to the accomplishment of the design she executed almost as soon as it was formed; and the cold bigotry of a nunnery received in its retreat the lovely convert, who in renouncing heresy hoped to secure happiness, and who fled from the visible glare of suffering to the sombre depths of seclusion.

Emma took a brighter, and after all a better, course. She recovered in time from the dangerous impression which the insidious Italian had laboured to effect, and lucky it was for her that his hands and his head were too full to

allow of his following up his half-formed designs against her. Freed from the bane of his flatteries, and alive to the sense of his discovered infamy, she rejoiced in her escape ; and it was just at the moment when her heart, having learned its own susceptibility, became aware of its wants, that young Christopher de Mansfeldt, handsome, gay, and graceful, offered himself to her affection, and was promptly and candidly accepted. A residence at Godesberg with her kinswoman the electress became a matter of course. There she became established, the friend and confidant of Agnes ; and Christopher did not fail to add his presence to the delights of that elegant retreat, whenever his absence from camp or garrison was possible, and waiting until more favourable prospects than had yet arisen on him since his entrance into the elector's service, might enable him to join his destiny to her's, without fear of a combination of encumbrance too great for either to support.

Ernest de Mansfeldt, having no relish for his

brother's perilous career, had accepted an offer from Frederick II., King of Denmark, and had entered his service as his secret and confidential counsellor.

The old Baroness of Kriechlingen, had, as well as her daughter Emma, found refuge at Godesberg from the harrassing vicissitudes to which her intrepid husband was exposed, either during his active service in the field, or as commandant of some of those strong places which still held firm in their allegiance to Ghebhard Truchses. At the period to which our story has now reached he was stationed at Bonn, commanding that garrison as second to Charles Truchses, and doomed to share the fate which befel the latter, within two hours of the ominous accident which to Ghebhard's predisposed mind foreboded calamity, and which was certainly coincident with it in an overwhelming degree.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was during the time occupied by the elector and his wife in the conversation detailed in the last chapter, and within two hours of Ghebhard's departure from his brother's quarters, that a long-planned conspiracy, quickly converted into a general mutiny broke out in the city of Bonn. The mercenaries being first gained over by the agents of the Duke of Bavaria, the garrisons took advantage of the temporary absence of the chief commander from within the walls, suddenly rose up and overpowered the native troops whose fidelity to the elector was proof against the bribes and other seductions of the enemy. Baron Kriech-

lingen, lion-hearted but not lynx-eyed, was quite incapable of coping with the cunning contrivers of a plot, and before his valour had time to be brought into play to repress the revolt, his person was seized and placed in close confinement, together with the other principal officers left with him in the city. On the first alarm which reached the suburb headquarters of the gallant Charles Truchses, he sprang forth to meet, and he hoped to suppress the mutineers. But their measures were taken with too sure a calculation. He was instantly surrounded and disarmed; the few followers who attempted his rescue were cut down; and he was conveyed a prisoner to the dungeons of the castle-fortress where he had erewhile commanded as a prince.

The surprised and stupified citizens had no course but submission, let their predilections be what they might; but there is so much fickleness and selfishness in a town-mob, of all countries and all times, that it was hard to dis-

tinguish the truth from the falsehood in the shouts with which the rabble of Bonn welcomed the army of Ernest of Bavaria, which soon made its triumphant entrance into the widely-opened gates. Pretty nearly a repetition of the scenes which were acted at Cologne a few years before now took place in the capital; and the adherents of Ghebhard, given up to total despair, were fain to accept the best terms of compromise offered by their victorious foes.

Ghebhard Truchses was now fairly at bay, for soon the rushing pack of rabblement had swept along the road from Bonn to Godesberg, yelling in a chorus of terrific discord. The sound was not to be mistaken; and the quick eyes of the household soon discerned the confirmation of their fears, in the motley crowd of military and burgher assailants which hurried on to the assault of the castle, which not being fortified, and only provided with a few pieces of cannon for mere purposes of parade, was in-

capable of making almost any resistance against a serious attack. But one or two partizans of the elector who had succeeded in escaping from Bonn arrived at Godesberg, just time enough to break the ill news, and allow the household to take measures for checking the first impulse of an assault.

Ghebhard and Agnes heard at the same moment, but with far different sensations, the heralding sounds of their utter ruin. He, with an expression of voice and look that might be almost imagined to arise from a morbid satisfaction at the announced accomplishment of his superstitious belief, exclaimed,

“The hour is come—these are indeed the sounds of fate. Thank Heaven that I can meet it thus!”

And as he spoke he enfolded his wife in an impassioned embrace. But she, with the electric promptness of woman's fear for the safety of him she loves, sprang away from his encircling arms, and rushed towards a window

to see the nature and the extent of the danger she too surely felt to be at hand. At this moment, Walram, the still constant attendant of his master, entered the apartment in visible consternation, and stammered out some indistinct announcement of the peril.

“Who is the superior officer in waiting?” asked the elector with great coolness.

“Colonel Von Heyen, please your highness. He is in the anti-room—shall I summon him to your highness’s presence? I think he is the very man for this desperate crisis.—What a fearful yell!” exclaimed the affrighted valet.

“Yes,” soliloquized the elector aloud, “danger does level distinctions, and fear make men bold! This, Walram, is the first time for twenty years or more that I have ever known thee to have an opinion or venture to confess that thou couldst think. But never mind; it is but just that I should agree in thy opinion now—thou hast never yet differed from mine. Let Colonel Von Heyen attend me!”

In the few minutes which elapsed before the colonel appeared, with Emma Von Kriechlingen, other ladies and some household officers who rushed in promiscuously, Agnes stood in deep silence, regarding with fixed look the wondrous calm, the impassible composure, with which her husband sat, listening to the increased vociferations of the assailants without, and gazing on the various modifications in which alarm and terror acted on the groups before him, while rumours of ill poured rapidly in. But those moments were not lost for Agnes. In that brief space she read deep and far into her husband's mind, and into the futurity of feeling if not of events which now opened out before both him and her. A few minutes produced in her a change that years might have been thought insufficient for. Her whole character underwent one of those miraculous transformations that are more like the phenomena of physical than moral nature. The calm, reflective, negative qualities by which

she had before been distinguished, were from this instant altered into the positive and energetic combination which had been hitherto as foreign from her disposition, as it had until then formed the characteristics of him who seemed suddenly to have utterly lost it. He was like some noble courser which had long shown vigour and courage of the finest stamp, but which suddenly breaks down at the very crisis when perseverance is more than ever necessary to make him reach the goal.

“Well, Gaspar,” said Truchses, as the gallant young colonel stood before him, a picture of stern valour and devoted fidelity, “so we are at length beset in our last lair! What is the extent of this ill news and of our present danger?”

“There are no bounds to either, your highness. It all amounts to total ruin. The castle will be presently assailed at all sides, and there is not the least hope of holding out half an hour against a bold attack.”

“Are my brother and Baron Kriechlingen indeed made prisoners at Bonn?”

“It is true, your highness, and with them Count Christopher de Mansfeldt and—”

A hysteric scream from Emma broke the sentence; and while Agnes and the other females hastened to aid in composing the afflicted girl, Von Heyen briefly confirmed the reports already hastily made by Walram and others.

“Then since it is indeed thus,” said Ghehard, “since destruction is unavoidable and resistance vain, we have but to meet our fate with dignity. You are ready, Von Heyen, to obey my orders?”

Von Heyen hesitated a moment, for he could not quite comprehend the expression of the elector’s voice and looks.

“I have hitherto lived but to obey your highness,” said he, after a pause.

“Then, my orders now are that you throw wide the castle-gates, let the enemy enter, and that you do not suffer an arm to be raised, or

a life perilled for the vain object of protracting the fate of me and mine. Since Heaven abandons us we may well give up hope. Let all who hear me take their own parts and make what conditions they may. I have no further power for others' service or my own."

At these gloomy words, the crowded room showed specimens of despair in all its symptoms of weakness and of strength. Nor were those displays confined in their separate developments to either sex. Mind, on occasions such as this, vindicates its own dignity against the paltry prejudices of men and falsifies the common estimate of male and female courage. Delicate women there rose up in heroism, to meet the fate before which stalwart soldiers quailed. The paleness of desperation, the nervous flush, the sternly-fixed eye, the clenched hand, the grasped weapon—every variety of resolute intention was to be seen, mixed with those evidences of human feebleness, inseparable from, and almost excusable in, such a scene.

When Truchses ceased speaking he folded his arms across his breast, and looked up towards Heaven, as if his thoughts were entirely concentrated there.

And then, amidst the din of words and wailings, of oaths and shrieks, from the assembled household, while every variety of hostile sound, from the roar of cannon and the rattle of musquetry to the shouts of command and the yells of fury, arose from without, Von Heyen on whose decision the fate of all seemed now to depend, cast one look on Agnes, as if it was from her and her alone that he sought his inspiration in this fearful crisis. She stood, looking around her with ardent gaze, as if she sought to read the varying countenances and separate characters of all present. Her right hand was placed on her heart; her left was closed nervously; her arm extended; her whole look a compound of courage and command.

“Madam,” said Von Heyen, “what are your highness’s orders?”

“ That all resist to the last moment and the last man ! That no means of defence be left untried, that every nerve be strained to the utmost ! Let every one able to wield a sword or fire an arquebuss turn instantly out into the courts. Let the women mount the parapets and towers and hurl down missiles on the foe ! Let the war cry be—”

“ Agnes ! Agnes and victory ! Long live the electress, our glorious sovereign ! Agnes, Agnes for ever !” loud shouted Von Heyen, and the enthusiast cry was echoed from almost every throat of those present. The most timid were roused to action, the brave inflamed to fury. Swords were brandished, hands thrown aloft ; while loudly redoubled stamping on the floor spoke the energy that animated both body and mind of the excited throng. Truchses, roused from his abstraction and imperfectly catching the meaning of the rapid scene, started from his seat at the first burst of voices, and

recovering instantly his usual lofty tone and attitude he asked,

“Am I then obeyed? Is the enemy come?”

“Disobeyed, gloriously disobeyed,” exclaimed Von Heyen, throwing himself on one knee before his master—“and by me, my sovereign; me, your most faithful, your most devoted creature. You shall, in your own despite, be saved—If my sacrifice can save you.” The intrepid soldier then arose and turning round he cried, “Out, out to the gates my friends! Up women, all, to the turret towers—hurl down the piled-up stones in showers of ruin—Let torrents of boiling liquid rain on the enemy’s heads—Forward—forward!”

He rushed from the chamber; and the vaulted corridors and halls resounded with the war-cry of himself and his bold followers, as they hurried to the scene of action, while from the lofty towers the shrill voices of the women soon sent down invective and defiance along with the galling and murderous combination

detailed by Von Heyen for the enemy's annoyance.

The feelings of our heroine—is she not such at length, and beyond all cavil?—were not hurried away, like those of vulgar or undisciplined minds in moments of excitement. Her thoughts seemed in all places at once—her affections in but one. Having effected her first object, the counteraction of the almost fatal effect of her husband's despair, she now was resolved that he should profit by the advantage she had gained—for him and over him.

“ My husband !” exclaimed she, in tones of most affectionate entreaty, but her voice as she proceeded swelled into the loftier melody of command, “ my best beloved, what change has passed across thy mind to unman thee thus, in the hour that thy undaunted spirit needs even more than its wonted strength ? Where has thy courage fled to ? Is this indeed the man who has filled all Europe with the fame of his daring deeds ? The proud defier of pope and emperor

—the mark against which fate threw its shafts in vain? What! subdued at last by the shadow of a superstition? Oh, my own husband, turn back into yourself—rouse up, nor be outdone in gallant bearing by even the women of my household. Listen to those inspiring shouts, they are raised for thee. Look out on the bold actions of thy heroic followers—art thou alone to turn craven at such a time! Thou speakest not, thy look is fixed on me—Oh let it turn aside—let its wonted tenderness be quenched in the fiery glance of war. Take thy sword from its scabbard Truchses, let it flash dread in thy enemies' face, and encouragement and valour to thy friends, so may terms even now be made for the safety of all. Thou wilt not? I cannot move thee to this last and greatest duty? Then come, come without pause, and follow me. Since this cloud envelops thee too closely to be shaken off thou must walk in its shadow! Come, there is now no time to lose."

“ Where wouldst thou lead me, my Agnes ? I dare not fly in heaven’s face, or fight against its manifest decree.”

“ There is but one course left for us now—escape. Hesitate not, or we are lost indeed. The subterranean way is clear—Come, my own husband—thou wouldst not let me seek its perils alone ? Thou wouldst not sure abandon me ?”

“ Abandon thee !” exclaimed Ghebhard, springing forward and seizing her proffered hand—and then, after a moment’s pause—“ On, on, my Agnes, when and where thou wilt. Heaven speaks, in thy voice and shines in thy beaming looks—on, on, I am in all ways thine !”

Agnes took her husband’s arm, and she hurried him from the chamber out into the corridor, and she stopped at the apartment occupied by the Baroness Von Kriechlingen, with the intention of seeking means for enabling her and Emma to accompany their flight. Here a painful scene met her view. Emma, with dis-

hevelled locks and disordered dress, knelt by her mother's couch—alone and unassisted in her efforts to support and revive the exhausted sufferer, struck suddenly with paralysis by the violent shock produced by the passing events. Agnes, forgetting in the impulse of generous sympathy, everything but the sad spectacle before her, shook off her husband's hold, and gave her whole aid to the feeble efforts of her friend. The wretched patient wore the aspect of death, but her pulse still seemed to throb, and a faint breathing belied the evidence of her livid and distorted looks. The almost distracted daughter, turned for awhile from the grief caused by the news of her lover's captivity, seemed wholly absorbed by this fresh calamity ; and the most wild and heart-rending lamentations burst from her.

In the meantime the increasing noises from without, the frantic shouts within the castle, the hurrying feet, and the clatter of warlike implements moved to and fro, told that the contest

was carried on with a desperation which promised a speedy term.

“Fly, fly, your highness, or it is too late—the frail portals cannot long resist—our men are falling fast,” cried an officer, who was sent by Von Heyen to seek the elector, and who found him in the calm attitude of attendance at the door of the apartment into which Agnes had entered. She heard the appalling summons for flight, and with brief and broken phrase she proposed to Emma to accompany her in her attempt at escape—scarcely, however, venturing to urge, or hoping for her compliance with, a proposal which must necessarily have left her expiring mother to the doubtful mercy of a furious enemy. Emma, in wild but firm language, refused to quit her sacred duty to her parent, and with frenzied gestures she almost forced Agnes from the chamber. Our heroine had but one great impulse of action left—her husband’s safety. Had he even then showed anything beyond the most hopeless resignation

to their threatened fate, or given the least symptom of recovered energy for his own relief, Agnes had assuredly not quitted her young kinswoman, her all but sister, and would have shared the perils of her pious task. But the paramount influence of conjugal love left her no choice, no struggle. She once more caught Ghebhard's arm, and hurried him along.

They had reached the top of the great staircase, which was obstructed by a retreating crowd of servants, flying they knew not where, and for the vague object of safety with what chance they could not calculate. The elector and his wife, scarcely recognised by their own people, and but little attended to or thought of in the general scramble for escape, forced their way forward as best they might; and they had descended to one of the principal halls when they were met by Walram, trembling and ghastly-looking, but who from long habit could not avoid feeling a sort of protection in the mere presence of his master. He recovered ap-

parently from his terror, and found breath and courage enough to exclaim, not quite coherently,

“Your highness has taken the wrong way—the enemy have forced the gates, and are fighting their way hither through the court-yard.”

“Whither goest thou, Walram?” asked the elector.

“I know not, your highness—I was flying I know not where—but in faint hopes of finding you.”

“Now then thou has found me man, stand by me—it is thy best chance.”

“This way, this way down by the south cloisters!” cried Agnes, turning into a low passage; when, at the moment, a band of infuriate combatants rushed into the hall, the assailants far out-numbering the household defenders, who were driven back, cut down, and trampled on without mercy. One group instantly interposed between Agnes and Ghebhard and the passage into which Walram had already es-

caped. The way was completely barred, and two of the ruffian enemy attempted to seize on Agnes, with some insulting expressions which evidently told that they knew her, or unerringly guessed who she was. At this outrage Ghebhard resumed at once his natural character. He grasped a sword from the hand of a wounded man who tottered near him, and with a well-aimed blow struck one of the fellows to the floor. Then pressing on the other who retreated from before his path, he gained ground every moment, Agnes clinging to his side, but her courage and strength almost failing under the excitement of the shocking scene.

And now a fresh burst of fighting men who drove all before them formed a new and almost impassable obstacle, when Von Heyen, disputing inch by inch the ground of his retreat, came towards the still closely-engaged elector, and seeing the object for which he battled, the devoted soldier was too happy, even at the sacrifice of his life, to afford a chance of safety

to the sovereign to whom he owed everything and the heroic woman whom he gloried in dying for. In a few minutes every living obstruction fell beneath, or fled from his powerful strokes ; and he lifted Agnes over the dead and wounded bodies which thronged the floor. She entered the passage, uttering a scarcely-heard sentence of gratitude to her preserver, and Ghebhard as he sprang after her grasped Von Heyen's hand in his with a pressure that spoke volumes of thanks, and he uttered one short exhortation to follow them to the vaulted passage beyond the cellars.

“Now then, come on, cowards !” cried Von Heyen, standing firmly before the passage, with uplifted arm ready to receive the foes, who scarcely waited for his taunting challenge before they rushed on him in a throng. He had already been more than once wounded, but the sight of his own blood inflamed his rage, in a ratio far more than proportioned to the effects of weakness produced by its loss ; and for a short

time he gained almost supernatural strength. But numbers pressed on him too fiercely for much longer resistance, and he only dreaded that he must fall ere time sufficient was given for the fugitives to reach the subterranean passage, into which he clearly felt he was not destined to follow them.

Just as his assailants had nearly borne him down, for he fought almost unaided against fearful odds, and as the shrieks from various parts of the castle told him the horrors that were going on above, a huge fellow forced his way through the enemy—alas, he too was of them ! and loudly called out for the privilege of striking the death-blow to the gallant Von Heyen.

“ You know me not, perhaps ? ” cried he with insulting accents, as the latter paused panting and gazing, while he leaned on his reeking weapon for a moment’s rest. “ Look here, Von Heyen ! ” and as he spoke he took off his casque and showed a long broad scar which

the fierce exercise of the day made deeply crimson although it was full five years cicatrised. "Look here at your own work, the price of your promotion—your first step to military honours, when you struck that fell stroke on an unarmed man I was an ignorant artizan. Now I am a tried soldier like yourself. I am able to cope with you and to avenge the dastard blow. I have worked hard to learn the rapier's use, and long waited for the hour when I might measure swords with you. Are you ready?"

"I remember thee, rascal," said Von Heyen contemptuously. "Thou art of old too great a talker ever to make a good fighter. I have made my mark already on one side of thy ugly face; now I warn thee, take care of the other!"

And scarcely had he uttered the threat when a prompt stroke from his practised arm broke down the fellow's guard, and cut his head nearly through and through. He fell in the death agony at his too-powerful antagonist's

feet ; and the latter did not himself survive many minutes after this his last exploit. A score of weapons made his body their sheath ; and his gallant spirit required the outlet of as many wounds to escape by.

As Ghebhard and Agnes hurried on through the cloisters, they faintly saw a man flying before them as rapidly as the imperfect light allowed. As he approached the extremity, beyond which he saw no means of egress but one turning which would have led him back towards the throng of the fight, as the clang of martial weapons too plainly told him, for he forgot in his fright another passage, half closed up and rarely used, he stopped for a moment, and then, with the surpassing agility of terror, he scrambled up the rugged wall, and strove to force himself through one of the narrow casemates, which admitted a gleam of light, but was not meant for the outgoing of any living thing.

“ Why, Walram, Walram ! ” cried Ghebhard, “ it is I. By heaven, the man’s fears

have turned his brain ! He is forcing himself out upon the dry fosse—a fearful fall ! Walram, I say !”

But his voice, if heard, was only a fresh cause of terror to the frightened valet, who with almost incredible efforts had squeezed himself through the aperture. He seemed at length to shoot forth with nervous force, and disappeared. Truchses stopped one moment to listen—but the hellish din within the castle stifled the death-shriek which burst from the poor victim as he fell down into the fosse. He was not alone in the manner of his destruction. Several men, and women too, threw themselves headlong from the turret towers that morning, rather than risk the treatment to be looked for from the savage victors.

In a few minutes more Ghebhard and Agnes had turned through a secret door leading to the vaulted cellars, and thence safely gained the subterranean way, known but to a few of the old domestics of the household, but never

thought of as a refuge by any of them, from the dread belief of its being the chosen repair of ghosts and demons, and nothing else but an entrance into cavern-depths of terrible destruction.

In this well-assured sanctuary the fugitives remained for several lingering hours ; and at length forcing their way through its abounding obstructions, they reached the cavity of whose existence they were both well informed, and through it they entered into a low tangled mass of brushwood which skirted the river. In the close neighbourhood they found, by a happy chance, a loose-formed raft with its paddle, abandoned most likely by its owner when he fled in alarm at the tumult ; and to its fragile means of traversing the Rhine they owed their escape to the foot of the Drachenfels, and thence into the heart of the seven mountains, their crags, and forests and desolate dells, fit shelter for the outcasts and exiles of the peopled world.

To this day the tradition holds that Ghehard Truchses and Agnes escaped from Godesberg to the opposite side of the Rhine, by a sub-aqueous passage. But science in their time had not found power to execute, though enterprize might have imagined, the giant project of such a tunnel, the success of which is even now an unsolved problem.

CHAPTER VIII.

THUS was Ghebhard Truchses, the once-powerful prince, the ambitious prelate, the spoiled child of fortune, reduced by this last stroke of fate to complete destitution, with her for whose sake alone he was now susceptible of any of those crushing feelings which such a situation might engender. The thought that he had reduced her to this state, that he might by timely concession have compromised for her safety and support, the self-reproach of having under any possible contingency caused her the risk of such a lot absorbed his mind. Every thing, every person was now forgotten in the overwhelming sentiment of her misery. She

on her part endured a combination of sufferings more poignant perhaps but not so oppressive as his. The doubtful fate of her brother, her friends, the faithful followers sacrificed for her and her husband's safety all arose on her mind, together with the frightful chances of danger and death which now opened upon her view—not for herself, she would not have heeded the *certainty* even, in her own case—but for him in whose safety her existence seemed to be involved; and with all this there was conjoined one other feeling terrible under the circumstances, yet carrying with it a wondrous and redeeming consolation to a woman's mind.

Every way unprepared for the night air, loosely clad, without any means of sustenance for many hours, without any hope of shelter, they heard the chimes from the clock of their own sacked and desolate castle, and from two or three villages on either side the river, stricken; when finding it useless to proceed farther they stopped, and lay down side by side, on

the moss-covered earth in the depth of a dark glen. And there they passed the night!

Description may pause at such a passage as this in the life and adventures of two such beings; and imagination may exhaust itself in picturing what they said and thought, during the waking hours, and dreamt, in the brief snatches of sleep which exhausted nature saved from mental suffering.

And will it be thought extravagant to believe the possibility of even a situation so extreme holding the wild and wayward elements of compensation—almost enjoyment—to the high-wrought organisation of such minds as theirs? The sober-going son of common-place, the minion of luxury, the vulgar voluptuary may smile or sneer at the idea. But the romantic, the adventurous, and the daring can comprehend, even though they might never have experienced sensations, that touch on, if they do not quite amount to, pleasure, in scenes of peril and privation even more trying

than the one we describe. The charm of finding one's-self thrown, even by misfortune, from the beaten track of ordinary life, the new-found capability of endurance, the pride of suffering well, the charm of contrast, the awakened spirit of inquiry, all combine, to form a spring of energy and courage on which the elastic mind bounds into feelings it knew not of before,

It was a night of summer-warmth and summer-length. When the desolate pair lay down they could see nothing ; and no sounds were distinguishable in the distant gloom. How they sunk into sleep they knew not, for the mimic death gave no warning of its coming. They dropped suddenly and together into forgetfulness ; and the fantastic freaks played by their trance-struck minds had no connecting link to bind them to the past.

They awoke — and at once. A start, a broken exclamation—a wondering gaze, around and at each other, brought them to life and to perception again. “ He is safe ! ” “ She is

safe !” was the first prompt utterance of reciprocal sensation. A renewed embrace — for they had slept fast locked in each other’s arms — came next. Then a gushing flood of tears from her, and a thousand kisses to dry them up from him ; and next, by mutual instinct, an instant posture of prayer and a murmured burst of thanksgiving—such was the opening scene of this new epoch in their eventful course.

It was more than dawn, for the sun darted his golden glances through the forest-depths, and the stems of the trees, the branches, and the leaf-covered ground were here and there streaked with yellow gleams. Innumerable birds were chirping and singing above. But the only earth-born sound was the voice of a small rivulet, so deadened in the overhanging weeds that its murmurings were carried outwards by the faint breeze, more like fitful echoings than a constant and original sound ; while the breeze itself was only to be disco-

vered by the wild flowers' scent that at times swept upwards in a fragrant swell. Ghebhard prayed fervently and aloud, as though duty and habit both were joined with the impulse of the moment. The pure thoughts of Agnes rose silently and spontaneously to heaven, less as it might seem by an effort of her will than by the sympathy of attraction, like the dew-drops around her, sucked up invisibly by the sun.

They arose, and Truchses first broke the holy silence in which both had stood for awhile.

"Oh, Agnes, oh, my beloved!" said he, "can all this indeed be real? Have we lived through the horrid scene of yesterday, and slept through a whole long night unconscious and unharmed? And is the wide world as nought to us? Have we no shelter for our heads—no friends—no sanctuary? Are we driven out on earth alone, to be hunted like noxious beasts, or shunned like tainted lepers? Is this a fate for thee! Hast thou deserved

this! And I—should I have brought this on thee? Oh, I could lie down again and die in my shame!”

“My own husband,” replied Agnes, tenderly embracing him, “these words are my reproach not thine. For is it not for my sake that thou hast earned all thy hard fortune? Was not I the fatal cause of all thy ills, the pretext for thy persecution? But I have no remorse. I make no wail for the past. We have acted for love’s sake—we have done no ill. Heaven has visited us heavily, but are not our consciences unscathed?”

“Before high heaven, here in God’s natural temple, I swear that I am conscious of no crime so heavy as to have brought thee to this cruel pass, my Agnes!”

“It is as nought to me, for my own sake—and could I but see ruin sit lightly on thee, Ghebhard, I would smile at and defy it.”

“Oh, how bewitching are thy least words, how magical thy looks! How well thy beauty

suits with this scene—thou seemest a part and parcel of its holiness. How beautiful is nature Agnes, and how bountiful is Providence! Is not all earth a paradise till man defaces and pollutes it! Oh, how delighted I could live with thee for ever in this sylvan solitude; how thoroughly forget the world, all that I have lost and suffered; and let my rest of being glide away far in these forest depths. But that, alas! is a vain thought. The hideous world's before us; reft of all charm, all chance, all hope of good.”

“Not so—not so, my husband. Providence is just as well as bountiful, and will not forsake us. I feel as though we were both new born, or like the first created pair, thrown into life full formed, with knowledge of the past, equivalent to God's spoken counsel, and faith in his power, as strong as though he walked in visible majesty by our side. We shall find a paradise yet in this broad world; some nook where persecution may not follow us, where

sin may not enter, and from which no angry angel shall expel us. Cheer up, lord and life of my being—let a new era break upon thee—let sorrow for the friends we have lost be now the only bitter drop in the full chalice of enjoyment. Let us on then in our course, trusting in heaven's guidance, and seeing in nature's boundless beauties the fitness, the harmony, and the fullness of all things, those manifest miracles of creation which hold a pledge of safety and of happiness to man."

"Happiness, my Agnes? Ah, does not your enthusiastic virtue lead you now too far? Can there be happiness for the wholly destitute, who have once revelled in life's luxuries, who have had almost all greatness in their grasp and who might fairly have aimed at *all*?"

"Alas, it is that false estimate of happiness that makes so few people happy. We fancy it to consist in some great good, too distant to be reached—too large to be encircled in our hold,

while it is really formed of little things—flowers and gems that we spurn beneath our feet unnoticed, in that wild race after what is not it. Then let us, my husband, henceforth shun the spurious and collect the real, till from the thousand elements around us we form a bright and fragrant coronal that nothing may stain or wither.”

“ Where seek, where find those elements, but in thy fancy, Agnes ?”

“ Oh, they are everywhere, each minute of life is full of them—they are the diamond sparks of thought, the odorous buds of feeling—*We* have a mine, a garden in our own hearts, and we must, we will gather the rich harvest yet ! I promise thee this my husband.”

“ My Agnes, there is a spirit of prophecy in thy tone and looks, an inspired conviction, that make thee seem more than mortal ! What is it, love, that in this desolate and dreary passage of life throws o’er thy beauty this superhuman glow, as though a shower of good had fallen on

thee, instead of this cruel storm? Oh, tell me truly, and let me if possible catch a spark from the bright beam—for I feel deadly chill in spirit, and almost sinking to despair. Speak comfort, Agnes, if thou canst—I am in sore need of it, for thy sake and my own.”

“ I will, I will, and God grant that what I have to reveal may be to thee a living spring of joy, a covenant of comfort as it is to me! Oh, my best love, is not Heaven good, to have reserved to this hour of trial the healing balm of our heart’s wounds? Does not thy ardent mind anticipate the tidings? Need I speak more? Have the deep yearnings of four years not led thee to an instinctive knowledge now?—Yes, yes, my husband, it is true! We do not now walk alone in life’s drear wilderness, with mere personal objects and but selfish wants or wishes; but now, fulfilling the high destiny of our kind, we have a holier fellowship—we were *not* born for nought but to live and perish.”

This *was* plain speaking to the ready and

enraptured intellect of Truchses. He caught from the first phrase the tenor of his wife's coming revelation, and the transport it created was unbounded. The great longing of his life had been—beyond ambition's furthest stretch—for offspring, rather from an inborn sentiment than from any definable purport of delight. It was a want of his heart—a never-ceasing pulse of expectation ; and the as yet unfulfilled blessing had been the only drawback on his wedded happiness. Had it been from the mere pride of handing down his name, his honours, or his greatness, it would have been only in prosperity that he would have valued it. But the uncalculating delight with which he now hailed the announcement, in ruin and worldly wretchedness, proved that he was acted on but by that instinct of paternal love which nature has planted in man's heart. And those who contemplate the joy of Agnes, both for her own and her husband's sake, and all her exquisite imaginings of joy to come will admit that woman has, in the

mysterious plan of heaven, a glorious compensation for the great suffering and apparent injustice of her share in the world's design.

Ghebhard and Agnes left the scene of this hour of happiness and sallied forth from the glen, with a bounding confidence that made them wholly fearless of discovery. But they met no one—nor friend nor foe. The romantic woods through which they wended their way were as uninhabited and unexplored as some primitive forest of the new world. In a period of time even apparently shorter than it really was, they reached the term of their present pilgrimage. Truchses knew enough of the general topography of the wild district of the seven mountains to find his way with little deviation to Nuenar's castle, deep buried among the mountains, but standing on an eminence in the forest in the direction of Lowenburg.

It was broad day when they arrived at the once cheerful residence, where Nuenar was happy and honoured in giving a nobly hos-

pitiable welcome to his bosom friend, the Elector of Cologne. The contrast was now hideous. A mass of ruins met Ghebhard's view, without any symptoms of a living thing save the birds which roosted fearlessly within the walls, or the hares and rabbits which sported in the brush-wood that filled the courts. He knew that this favourite retreat of his chief captain had been sacked and partly burned by the enemy a year before. But his imagination had not dwelt on the details of destruction; and a thrill of remorse now assailed him when he pictured this staunch ally ruined and a prisoner for his cause alone, some analogous feeling passed through Agnes's mind at the same moment. But it passed quickly from one as from the other. They were losing rapidly their sympathy with former feelings. An inborn presentiment seemed to tell them the frail tenure which they held on others' sympathy.

The high excitement of the morning was subsiding, and the weaknesses of nature became

paramount over the ecstasies of mind. Food was now the immediate want, and to procure it seemed at first sight impossible. Urged by this powerful impulse, Truchses made his way through the tangled obstacles which beset him and his almost fainting companion, into the very heart of the desolate building; and at length arrived at a remote and low outhouse at the foot of what he well remembered to have been called "The Skeleton Hunter's Tower," in allusion to some wild tradition of the place. In this unpromising locality he found all that he wanted now, and more than he dared to hope for, food and shelter, and a friend! An old woman, one of the oldest followers of the family of Nuenar, born and bred in the place, beyond which she had no tie, nor interest, nor inducement for research, had clung tenaciously to the spot; and lived there since the castle was sacked and its inhabitants scattered on the world. Alone and almost forgotten, she occasionally went out into the distant villages, to raise con-

tributions on the charitable or to purchase some few necessities with the hoarded store of former savings. But no visitor ever approached her dwelling. Superstition was her guarantee against intrusion, and a sufficient counterpoise to any friendly feeling that might have prompted a humane peasant to lighten by a friendly call her desolate seclusion. It was believed that magic alone had preserved from the fire (which almost entirely consumed the castle) this lonely tower, long believed to have been haunted; and the perseverance with which the old woman identified herself with the unholy place brought her a share of the general suspicion and dread attached to it.

She well remembered the once mighty Elector of Cologne, his visits to the castle, his magnificent hunting parties in the forest, and his princely generosity to herself and the other household retainers. There was a spring of gratitude and goodness in her old heart, and she at once received Truchses and Agnes under

her protection, and promised and preserved inviolable secrecy, and proved unshaken in her fidelity to their fortunes.

There was happily nothing repulsive in the looks, the manners, or the habits of this old creature. She had been handsome in her youth, and was healthy in her old age, a natural good taste made her attentive to cleanliness in person and to neatness and regularity in her solitary home. She had saved from the wreck a superabundance of materials for household wants; and a couple of chambers in the haunted tower were ready filled, with even more than the conveniencies of lodging. After the peremptory appeals of hunger were answered, by a homely meal quickly prepared; and eaten with a gusto that the overburthened feasts of the electoral palaces had never excited, Agnes and her husband proceeded to inspect the lonely building which they at once decided on making their sanctuary. Fatigued, not more by bodily exertion than mental excitement, Agnes, after some

preliminary arrangements, sunk into repose, on a bed of down little to be looked for ; while her chamber was furnished with an incongruous collection of articles, some of them as costly as those to which she had been all her life accustomed. The whole situation of the place seemed a mockery on greatness, and the lesson was not lost on its forced occupants.

No sooner did Ghebhard see that Agnes slept soundly, than he felt impressed with a restless wish to explore minutely the ruins of the castle, and also to extend his wanderings out into the forest precincts, in hopes of calming down into some form of regular thought the turbulent flood of his sensations. It was sunset before he returned from a solitary ramble, in which his reveries came nearer to the tone of true philosophy than had been reached by the most acute and loftiest cogitations of his previous life.

Agnes awoke from her slumber, refreshed and revived in a manner before unknown to her.

She had often slept the sleep of weariness, but never of downright fatigue till then. Her frame seemed to have acquired a new spring. She arose, and seeing the volume of golden light poured into her chamber, she concluded that the sun was sinking beyond the Rhine, that long-loved territory with which so many chequered feelings were connected, where her best affections were born, her highest aspirations reached, and where so many heavy strokes were dealt to the worldly well-being of herself and those most dear to her. She was in a mood to see nature in one of its most affecting and instructive aspects, when the rich flood of departing light pours melancholy and consolation at once upon the mind, and fits it for all that is elevating and soothing in reflection. Agnes softly quitted the chamber, lest her watchful hostess might officiously interrupt, in the view of assisting her. She ascended the stone stairs of the tower, to the story over that occupied by her apartment, and from the windows of the

vacant room above she gazed on the glorious spectacle of sunset, in a wide range of forest and hill scenery, and she lingered long, marking the gathering shades that shut the pageant out.

Anxious, at length, to seek her husband, she turned away, and observing a small and half-closed door that opened in the direction opposite to her descent, she pushed it aside, and stepped into a long and narrow corridor, that had evidently communicated with the main body of the building ; curiosity led her on, and at every step she marked the ravages of the fire on the walls and floor, which were partly consumed and blackened. Several remnants of furniture, and pictures fallen down half burnt and broken, were the only objects to be observed, till at the farthest end she saw one large framework unharmed against the wall, a mouldy and moth-eaten cloth curtain concealing from view the picture she supposed it to contain. The fire seemed to have suddenly stopped on reaching

this mysterious object ; and Agnes felt impelled by its singularity to raise the curtain and examine its contents.

Her eye first caught the figure of a man in an ancient and grotesque hunting suit, painted with the rigidity of the earliest successors of Van Eyk, and a pair of hands of the same primitive school, coloured to the life, but setting grace and anatomy at defiance. Agnes threw a glance upwards to mark the countenance of this unattractive form, and was quite prepared to see some harsh and repulsive daub. But when she brought her looks to a level with the head and fixed them on it, an involuntary scream of horror burst from her—she clasped her hands forcibly across her eyes—and turned from the hideous object.

It was a loathsome likeness of a half-unfleshed skull that stood out, as it were, from the canvas, rising on a bare neck from the cramped and distorted body, and surmounted by a bonnet and plume of black feathers. Nothing could

exceed the frightful accuracy of this object, in form and colour. It showed the hideous expression of grinning ugliness, the hollow depths of eye-sockets, and the carious tints of decay, with a revolting truth that spoke it to have been painted from a charnel-house model. The semi-human contrast between life and death was monstrous. It was overpowering to Agnes. She retreated in ineffable disgust. But she had not gone half-way back through the corridor when she plainly heard pursuing steps, sounding she thought as a forest-hunter's foot might sound. She thrilled with a nameless terror ; but she could not turn her head, though she felt that the steps were gaining on her—and, in the sudden confusion of the senses, she thought her own name was sounded hollowly in her ears. Every moment seemed to bring closer to her the embodied reality of the shocking object she fled from ; and she anticipated from instant to instant that which would see her clasped by the loathsome prototype of the skele-

ton-hunter's portrait. Panting, throbbing, and almost wild with fright, Agnes at length felt her pursuer's breath close on her neck, and in a moment more a deadly grasp seemed encircling her. In that involuntary impulse which makes us court the most horrid certainty in preference to suspense, she cast her staring and glazed looks behind, and she saw the anxious countenance of Ghebhard close to her's, whilst his arms supported her almost fainting body. She could scarcely believe that she only recovered from an imagined peril. She felt that she, too, possessed those susceptibilities of superstition common to the age she lived in ; and, for many minutes after she had reached her apartment, the personified terrors of the painted phantom seemed still pursuing and still ready to grasp her.

The old woman was busily employed in the arrangements of the chamber when Agnes and Ghebhard returned. Our heroine, ashamed of her weakness, yet filled with a morbid impa-

tience to dwell on the subject, insisted on the old woman's relating the story which was connected with the picture, and which gave its name to the tower. The crone was ready and willing; for the supernatural legends of the place were to her as the air she breathed, and she, without hesitation commenced telling, as follows—

THE STORY OF THE SKELETON HUNTER.

“It was some centuries ago, ere the art of printing was known, and when even that of writing was confined to pious monks and a few learned clerks, that one of the ancestors of this noble house of Nuenar but whose name has not been preserved by the family genealogists, a knight of much renown in war, and a deep drinker and hard hunter in peace, happened to follow the chase in the neighbouring forest, which in those days spread close to the very banks of the Rhine and sent up its mists even upon the walls of the rude Donjon tower,

which then occupied the site of the present castle and the spacious courts and open grounds.

“The good knight found out at sunset that he was quite alone and had lost his way. It seemed strange to him that his followers should have suddenly disappeared: and stranger still that he should be at any loss to recognize the surrounding scene, as he thought himself acquainted with the most intricate parts of the forest. He vainly sought to extricate himself. The gloom grew thicker, the trees seemed to increase in height, and the brambles and underbushes to spring up in every direction in spontaneous confusion. Exhausted by his efforts to force a passage, the knight at last threw himself on the ground, his two faithful stag-hounds by his side; and there he lay till he heard the chimes of a distant clock mournfully sounding the hour of midnight. While the last tone still vibrated in the air, a confused rustling sound broke on the ears of the knight; and a glimmering lustre, neither like moonlight

nor dawn, was visible far away. He started on his feet, and seized his javelin in his hand. The dogs also sprang up, but instantly ran crouching between their master's legs and howled piteously. The noise and the light increased every instant. The tramping of many hoofs was mixed with discordant tones of hunting horns, and the whoops and halloos of the chase. A vast illumination of sulphureous gleams spread wide across the forest; and, to the knight's astonishment, the trees and bushes retreated back and away, leaving an immense space quite clear from wood, and covered with rugged stones.

“The knight, with all his bravery, felt himself to shake with fear; and his hair stood right on end, when he saw approaching him at full speed the figure of a hunter, on foot, his bow in his hand, his bugle at his belt, and followed closely by a troop of skeletons mounted on stags of enormous size. The hunter sought to escape by every possible

means. He twisted and turned in every direction but in vain. The skeletons flung javelins or shot arrows at him, accompanied with infernal yells ; and as the weapons pierced him through and through he uttered the most heart-rending screams, but still kept on his legs, and ran as though he were unhurt. A full hour passed on in this way, when the knight, who had during that stood transfixed with horror, recovered his presence of mind, threw himself on his knees, and loudly invoked the name of his own particular saint.

“ In an instant, the whole troop of phantom skeletons and their stags disappeared. The hunter whom they had been so long pursuing approached the knight, and said to him. ‘ Thanks and gratitude my deliverer ! That invocation of your’s has ended my torments and opened for me the path of Paradise. I am you far-back ancestor, Rudolf the hunter. Like you, I loved the chace, but alas ! I had no better pursuit than that, and I followed it

in cruelty and crime. I ruined my poor serfs with taxation and extortion; and whenever a wretch desperate with hunger was found poaching after my game, I used to have him siezed and tied on the largest stag, and sent out into the forest, pursued by my fiercest dogs to perish in untold agonies. You saw just now a repetition of my nightly punishment for centuries back; and it had been eternal, had not your presence and your prayer broke the charm, and dispersed for ever those ghosts of the sufferers who died by my tyranny. To-night my purgation ends; and to celebrate my fate I command you to build a chapel for the repose of my soul, and to have my portrait painted as I now am, and placed in the gallery, to hand down my likeness to our posterity, as a warning against my crimes and a token of my penance. But woe to the curious intruder, not of our own blood, who dares to look on it!' With these words he threw aside the hunting bonnet and the plumes which had hitherto con-

cealed his face, and displayed a death's head of a most hideous character. The knight swooned with horror; and when he awoke he found himself surrounded by some of his people, who had after many hour's search discovered him in the thickest part of the forest, senseless on the earth, his javelin in one hand, and his large cordial flagon held (empty) in the other. He returned to his castle, built the chapel the ruins of which formed the foundation of this tower, and in three days, (but by whose assistance never was known) the horrid portrait of Rudolf the skeleton hunter was finished from the good knight's accurate memory, and took its place among the others of his race, and has been from time immemorial covered with a curtain which was strictly forbade being raised. And it is said that the skeleton knight has often appeared since then, to arrest the curiosity that would pry into the monument of his guilt, and it is believed that three rash persons who have, notwithstanding,

raised the dark veil, have been instantly pursued by the portrait, and punished in a manner too frightful to record."

* * * * *

Many a time for successive months did Agnes shudder at the recollection of this story, and at the thought of her near neighbourhood to the picture; but as often did she deeply blush, from a sense of the weakness which she had power sufficient to despise but not to overcome.

CHAPTER IX.

UPWARDS of half a year passed over the heads of Ghebhard and Agnes in their obscure and unobstructed retreat. Of actual necessities they had no want, and experience taught them how limited are the exigencies of individual support, for those who can adapt themselves with good sense and good temper to unavoidable privations. They had each carried away some pieces of gold on the day of their escape from Godesberg—much more than was wanting for the expenditure of four times the term of their stay in the seven mountains—as well as some rings and other jewelled ornaments, which, converted into money, would

form a fund for future occasions. The fidelity and caution of their old hostess—so to call her—was their chief security and never-failing comfort. She procured for them in the distant villages many little luxuries, or what in present circumstances they chose to consider as such, and she also picked up snatches of news, imperfect and contradictory at times, but in the main correct, which greatly relieved their anxiety as to the fate of others.

By this means they learned the fact as creditable to human nature as it was consoling to themselves, that the furious assailants of the electoral castle had paid a tribute to filial tenderness and female virtue, by sparing Emma and her dying mother, and conveying both in safety to Bonn, where they were placed under the natural protection of the imprisoned Baron Kriechlingen, who together with Christopher de Mansfeldt and Charles Truchses, were soon after restored to freedom. The great mark of hostility, in fact, was Ghebhard himself; and he

having made his escape, his enemies felt little disposed to persecute his kindred or few adherents, who in the present prospect of affairs were utterly incapable of mischief to the newly-established order of things. Ernest of Bavaria was now the unopposed possessor of the dignities and the power of the electorate; and of all those who had mixed in the long and arduous struggle there was scarcely one who had not, in a few weeks after its termination, made terms of peace and security for themselves, with the exception of Count Nuenar, who, for some irreverent obstinacy, even after his last defeat, was still held in captivity by orders of the offended emperor. The fate of Truchses and his wife excited many speculations, and sundry marvellous reports concerning them were rife throughout Europe; but no living being, with the exception of their old protectress, imagined them to be still almost within sight of the central seat of their former greatness.

And few could have believed, even if they had been assured of, the profound and philosophic calm which had succeeded to the long-indulged impetuosity, the untamed ardour of temperament, which had distinguished Ghehard Truchses up to the epoch of his marriage, and the strong current of which had borne him on for subsequent years, even after the tide of his ambitious energy was on the ebb. Living now in and for themselves alone, and upheld by the exquisite feeling of parental hope, he and his admirable wife formed an instructive evidence of the blessed remedy which true love carries with it for all worldly ills. Enough has been recorded of their mutual train of thought; and the reader whom we would deeply interest in their fate must not be palled by multiplied details of their monotonous delights. Rather let them and their daily pursuits be left to the imagination of some, and the picture of their resignation and their content to others' wonderment. Many there are, we have no

doubt, who can believe in the truth of and sympathize with the actors in, such an episode of human feeling. Some there exist, we know, who are susceptible of sensations, and have experienced scenes, almost analogous.

How many a day was passed by the lone pair in quiet wanderings through the forest-paths, reading deep lessons of philosophy in the memory of the past, and finding rich elements of actual enjoyment in the wide book of nature lying unclasped before them ! It is almost inconceivable how soon and how completely a finely-organised mind adapts itself to inevitable circumstances of reverse, which would bring a blunted intellect to despair. The sense of enjoyment is proportioned to the vivacity of the mind, and the thousand fresh-springing sources of pleasure open to the more susceptible among human beings, far outbalance the power of that morbid tone of suffering which weighs down the dull. There is, besides, an inestimable gratification in the feeling of having

profited by the world's rude lessons, in being convinced that you know mankind from experience not theory. Nothing makes men more independent in mind than the circumstance of being ruined in fortune. They then know the feeble hold which mere sympathies of feeling or opinion give them on their kind. They discover how much of what seemed to spring from those causes was really owing to the strong tie of mutual interests. And as that is severed, and each individual is, as it were alone, we see the selfish, neglecting and striving to despise his ruined friend; the high-minded becoming indifferent to and viewing with pity his worthless associate.

These and many other as useful lessons were self-learned by Ghebhard Truchses in his half year's solitude. He grew thoroughly indifferent to many beings who had deceived and abandoned him, and to wrench himself from whom he once thought would have been excruciating torture. A conviction of the base-

ness of those one loved and confided in, is the true means of protection against the lighter assaults of ill fate. The ordeal of betrayed confidence is a cruel one for a sensitive mind. But if it be the only real means of coming to a wholesome estimate of human nature, happy are they who pass through it early, ere the heart is deadened by age to the abounding compensations of life, and while the truth it teaches can be turned to the advantage of those who in a new generation may reap the benefit of what has been learned by the last. Ghebbard Truchses required the rough blasts of suffering to clear away the romantic haze through which he had looked on the world. Good sense was at the bottom of his character; but strong feelings and active spirits had long retarded its development in the practical affairs of life, and he had been repeatedly a dupe to those who in comparison with him were shallow, ignorant, and untalented. It is a mistake to believe that wisdom is acquired by experi-

ence. Want of sense admits of no amelioration; though good sense may be improved. Knowledge of life may teach cunning, but wisdom is a gift of nature. A man may be eminently wise without knowing that he is so. When Solomon prayed to Heaven for wisdom, it was a proof that he possessed it already.

Our hero and heroine had now to endure another and a more cruel stroke of fate than any they had yet suffered from. All the hopes of their adversity—which repaid them a thousand-fold for the losses of their greatness—were doomed to be crushed for ever. The heart really sickens when it contemplates the mutual agony of this hapless couple, bereft of the pledge of their recovered serenity, the promise of joy to come. Attended alone by the old woman of the tower, who had been herself the parent of many children, Agnes had in due time become a mother. What a moment of enchantment for her, thus repaid for all suffering—for him, transport beyond all imaginable

bounds of delight. They lost their child—but to other pens must be left the task of dwelling on such a calamity, which they who can calmly describe have assuredly never keenly felt. They had now nothing to contemplate but flight from the scene of this suffering. As soon as Agnes was sufficiently recovered to encounter the fatigues, the risks, and the anxieties of a journey, they prepared to remove. But whither go? How travel? They left the decision of those questions to chance; and they were so decided.

It was now February. The snow still lay thick on the ground, the wind blew roughly, the forest view around was bleak and desolate. The red sun lit up at times the naked trees, as if in mockery of their deformity; at others a thick fog covered them, as though winter was ashamed of, and strove to hide the disgrace it had inflicted upon nature. But cold and dreary as was the world without, the heart-faintness of affliction within was less endurable.

To remain in this place was impossible—any other was better—and consequences, be they what they might, had now no terrors.

Agnes, supported by her husband—we speak of bodily support—for neither could now even assume, much less exert, an effort for the other's consolation — leaning on Ghebhard's arm, essayed an occasional walk, out in the open air, on a path which he had cleared in the snow-covered court of the castle. Truchses had procured, soon after their arrival, and through the management of the benevolent old woman, clothes for himself, of mean materials, fitting at random, and so uncouth in pattern and fashion that, coupled with his now untrimmed beard and woe-changed looks, they formed so thorough a disguise, that he could have run little risk of discovery had he walked in open day through the capital of his lost electorate. Agnes had also been provided, through the same source, with a couple of homely suits, such as befitted the female serfs

of the district ; and to accustom themselves to those dresses they wore them from time to time, having completely discarded the costly ones in which they escaped, and which seemed to form the last link in the chain of their former associations. It was on one of those bleak, bright mornings, ere spring can venture on its annual struggle with the frozen year, while the wintry sun shines without warming, like an old man's love, that Agnes and Ghebhard, so disguised, snatched an hour for her mid-day promenade. They had taken a few slow and melancholy turns on their restricted path, when they both started in a tumult of long-forgotten sensations on seeing Count Nuenar enter the desolate court-yard.

He had stopped, and was looking with a cold inquiry on the unexpected occupants of his ruined castle, but without recognising them. When they first observed him, Ghebhard, in such sudden burst of feeling as nature may be fancied to experience when a northern winter all

at once dissolves and disappears, sprang forward with open arms, and uttered in delighted accents the name of his long-loved and long-lost friend. Nuenar started in his turn,—but his movement was not a forward one. He no longer doubted Ghebhard's identity. He was too painfully sure of it. But this living appeal to all the generous sympathies of the heart, even Agnes's pale beauty, and the whole history of their sufferings revealed at a moment's recollection, failed to produce the least evidence of a correspondent pleasure at the meeting.

“Why, Adolphus,” exclaimed the not yet enough experienced Truchses, “dost thou not know me ! am I indeed so changed ?”

“Yes, yes, I know you ; and these blackened walls methinks 'are sharp whetters to my memory,” said Nuenar, taking, but after a faint pressure relinquishing again, the outstretched hand of his former friend.

Truchses' very heart seemed to collapse within

him. He drew back ; a flush passed across his cheeks.

“ The allusion is an apt, though scarcely a generous one, Count Nuenar,” replied he—
“ but your reproach may pass without retort, if it was only for its being so ill-timed.”

With these words Truchses turned aside, and rejoined Agnes, while Nuenar folded his arms and for a moment half-buried his face in his furred cloak, as Truchses supposed from shame but it was really from thoughtfulness. He did not long ponder for a rejoinder to Ghebhard's reply ; but, while the latter strove to repress his rising resentment, and Agnes gazed to read his feelings in his looks, the count advanced a few steps and resumed,

“ Ghebhard, these are no times for ceremony or false delicacy—”

“ Nor for civility or true delicacy, it would seem.—This lady is my wife, Count Nuenar,” said Truchses, in a stern yet broken voice.

“ 'Tis needless to remind me of it—you know

it is so—I am not now here to bandy compliments, but that lady's person is not one to be forgotten, let her play what part she may, in whatever masquerade.”

“ Play a part ! a masquerade ! ” exclaimed Truchses.

“ In one word—and I now address myself to both, meaning no offence but being earnest in thought and perhaps somewhat peremptory in phrase—I will not, cannot do more in a lost cause. Half-ruined in fortune, and but just released from a dungeon, you cannot expect that I will let myself be again dragged down—”

“ By Heavens, Count Nuenar, I will not and cannot let myself, already down as I am, be thus trampled on ! ” exclaimed Truchses, Agnes vainly endeavouring to restrain him, “ and in the bitterness of deceived opinion, I tell you that this is unworthy, unseemly, and unmanly.”

“ Ghebhard, I will have no war with you, not even of words. We have had enough me-

thinks of quarrelling with others—and it is not for two houseless men to fling ill language at each others' heads."

"And is it meet, sir, that I, unsheltered and unguarded as I am, should be made the mark of open insult thus? Is it through *her*, too, that I am to be assailed? For shame, for shame, Nuenar. The cruel wrong recoils on thee—thou art for ever disgraced in doing this!"

"Ghebhard, I stand on my honour and my integrity. Your taunts break at my feet like angry waves against a rock. And if it be that I show my resolute resistance to your selfish designs—my scorn of the trick that would take me by surprise—in a tone unpalatable to you or your syren accomplice, why, 'tis my nature and you must bear with it."

"Yes, yes! it is my time to speak—thou must not hinder me," exclaimed Agnes, advancing between the angry men, and repressing her husband's efforts to restrain her, for his

outraged feelings could not endure her condescending to speak to Nuenar.

“ I see there is some error in your mind, Count Nuenar—and great it must be to qualify to your conscience and your heart this scandalous outrage to a ruined and an innocent man. Your misplaced sarcasms against me pass, sharp but fleeting, like the breeze that colours while it chills my cheek. But this foul wrong against my husband must have a deeper source.”

“ I repeat, madam, with all due reverence for your sex and you, I will not wrangle here, nor be wrought to deeper ruin any where. If seven months’ pampering in the palatinate have led but to this scene, the lost electorate of Cologne stands little chance of recovery.”

“ This coarse enigma must be solved, Count Nuenar,” said Truchsès again, “ you may be under some delusion—Heaven grant you are so, for your own honour’s sake! what mean you?”

“ Will you then force me to explain how,

why, and wherefore I am prepared for this well-planned surprise? Must I needs prove to you that I know the scheme of your designing ally John Casimir, which, after half a year's concoction, you are now no doubt come—Heaven knows how!—from Heidelberg to bring to bear upon me? But, once more and for all, I promise you 'tis in vain, my peace with the emperor is made. I have done too much for you already; and these ruined walls, built up by my ancestors, defaced and shattered by my folly, might blush to see me again a dupe. Have I now said enough?"

"Enough, to convince me you have been indeed a dupe to some vile fable or false fancy. Too much, to make it possible to renew the bond of fellowship between us. Your dishonouring surmise, Nuenar, is unreal; our friendship is dissolved for ever."

"Well, be it so, if so it must be. It was a dear experiment—on my side at least, and we reaped small good from it. But if indeed I am

mis-informed in the widely-believed report of your having harboured with the palatine, while I lay in the stronghold of Nuremberg, or in my notion that your meeting me here now was by concocted plan, where, let me ask, have you found shelter since the disastrous day of Godesberg?"

"There!" said Truchses, pointing to the tower.

"There!" exclaimed Nuenar,—“nay, that would have been wretchedness indeed.”

“It was comparative delight to what a palace home had been, with a crafty mind or a hard heart. But I have now no hope of your comprehending either what we have enjoyed or what we suffered here. My uppermost feeling now is pain, to have owed you even the unmeant favour of a shed to cover and conceal us from the world.”

“Hold, Ghebhard—give me breathing time! I am indeed now taken by surprise—and is this possible? can this shell of misery have cribbed

in for months thy proud spirit, her unmatched beauty?—Say, madam, since he will not—”

“ It did more, Count Nuenar—it fostered our mutual faith in each other, and helped the growth of our conviction that all other reliance is a broken reed,” said Agnes, meeting his appeal more than halfway.

“ As *I* am ? Is it not so ? your words imply as much.”

“ *Your* words have proved it, Count Nuenar !” resumed she.

“ Yes,” observed Truchses, “ proved it, too clearly and too cruelly. But I spare you all further discussion on a painful topic, Nuenar—and will soon remove all risk of future embarrassment.”

“ Ghebhard, let us be still friends. I admit my fault—I offer thee my hand, my heart, my purse—”

“ No more, Nuenar, I reject them all ! It is too late. The sneer which began this conference on your part has broken the charm for

ever. Homeless, and all but pennyless, I could not in the teeth of an unfair reproach accept thy money or retain possession even of thy ruined tower. Prithee then let not our conference be prolonged; and excuse my thus ending it."

With these words, Truchses led Agnes towards the narrow and broken stairs which led up to their habitation.

"Ghebhard, one word! we do not surely separate as enemies?"

Truchses turned round, paused a moment, and said calmly,

"As enemies? No you have done too much in other days, you were lodged too strongly in my heart in better times, to let my feelings towards you turn to gall. If ever the wide chances of the world should bring us together again—but I devoutly pray that they may not!—I will meet you as coldly but more kindly than you met me erewhile. That is all I promise—more mayhap than you now care for, Nuenar. No,

I can never hate you, but I never can forget this scene. The wrong of an enemy may be in time forgiven—the slight of a friend, never. Farewel.”

A graceful but chilling salutation from Agnes confirmed her husband's fiat; and they then ascended to their pride-ennobled shed, in all the dignity of wounded virtue. And now one word of explanation for Count Nuenar, and through him perhaps of apology for human nature. His friendship for Ghebhard Truchses, if such it may be called, was a mere refraction of the broad and genial light which glowed in the latter's heart. He was less tinged than the general run of men in his romantic age, with the ardent colouring which gave to mere every day sentiments the force of passions. Friendship was with him a convenience rather than a conviction. He entered into Truchses' views and helped on his purposes, as has been long since explained, mainly for the furtherance of his own. And when Truchses was ruined, his

attachment was, by the very nature of its inspiration, burned out. Having made his own submission to the imperial dictation and seeing all chance of carrying his objects in the electorate of Cologne extinct, he was resolved to make the best he could of the future and to forget as much as possible of the past. He had really heard and believed that Truchses and Agnes were concealed by the elector palatine; and seeing them suddenly on this morning of his return (alone and in no mood of elation to inspect his ruined castle) pranked out as it appeared in peasant's suits, for the purpose of waylaying and impressing him into some new and hopeless struggle, he held no terms either with a proper sense of decorum or just delicacy towards them.

So far, to account for Nuenar's conduct. And as to his state of feeling and manner of expression few men who have passed through the ordeal of great worldly reverse will think them, even in these days of refinement,

as out of the natural course of things. The whole misfortune or fault—it is not worth disputing about terms—was in such a mind as Truchses' being led to lavish its high and noble feelings on one altogether unable to comprehend them. Yet Nuenar was not quite so dead to sentiment as not to wish to repair, in as far as was now left him, his harsh behaviour, while at the same time he might take measures for ridding himself thoroughly of so great a possible encumbrance, as the support of Truchses and his wife, and the imminent danger of being again compromised in their fate. Therefore, in leaving the place of this wild meeting, having first learned from the old guardian of the ruins enough to rouse every latent spark of his humanity, he wrote a letter of reconciliation and advice, with a detailed plan for Ghebhard's conduct; and assurance of assistance in all ways now possible. And this he despatched to the tower the next morning, from the neighbouring town, where he had left his attendants

when he chose to pay his solitary visit to the desolated monument of ancestral power. His messenger, wholly ignorant of the name and quality of the person to whom he bore this peace-offering, approached the ruins, ascended the tower—and found it empty. Ghebhard and Agnes had hastened their intended departure in consequence of the scene of the preceding day. And as soon as the dawn struggled through the night mists sufficiently to enable them to see the wood paths clearly, they had set out, after a cordial leavetaking, and giving an ample token of their gratitude to the faithful old woman: and a few minutes carried them for ever out of sight of the Skeleton Hunter's Tower. What Nuenar's reflections might have been, when assured of this sudden self-removal, we must not now stop to inquire, nor hereafter think it necessary to recur to.

CHAPTER X.

STILL feeble, yet braced by the accustomed exercise of the previous months, Agnes was well able to walk from the ruins to the nearest village, supported on her husband's arm; the other carrying a slight change of indispensable apparel, for they decided on leaving to chance the choice of those necessary supplies, the nature of which must depend on circumstances, to provide which on any reasonable scale of cost their funds were amply sufficient.

The plan of their intended journey had been deliberately traced the preceding day, in accordance with the project of previous consultations. There were but two princes in Europe

on whose protection Ghebhard could reckon with such certainty as might be drawn from their private characters and reliance on the sincerity of their political principles. Those were Henry IV. of France, and William of Nassau, surnamed the Taciturn, who was now at the very height of his fame and power, as the founder of Dutch freedom and the safeguard of the Protestant faith in the Netherlands. The first of those distinguished friends of the deposed elector was, however, still so harrassed in the possession of his sovereignty, that it would have been ungenerous as well as hazardous to have imposed a fresh burthen on him. Truchses therefore resolved on making his way if possible to Delft, the safe and quiet seat of the Prince of Orange's government, where he reigned over his created republic with all the influence of an absolute monarch, but with the firmness and moderation of a virtuous citizen. Of a welcome, Truchses had no doubt, for all he required was a present shelter, and for the future,

a moderate subsistence as a minister of the reformed church. These were moderate expectations for fallen greatness, and assured boons at the hands from which alone Truchses would have condescended to demand them. It was, then, to the banks of the not far-off Rhine that the wanderers now bent their steps; and a common waggon, hired at the first hamlet, was the conveyance which brought our half-exhausted heroine to the river's edge.

Their intention was to take their passage in one of those trading barges which sailed down from Germany to Holland; and their main wish was to meet with such a conveyance soon, to obviate the chances of being recognised while in so close a neighbourhood of their former possessions. Failing an early opportunity of travelling in this manner, they intended to coast down the river as best they might, until striking off towards Dusseldorf they might thus perhaps gain safely the frontiers of Holland. But this was a doubtful probability under the present

circumstances of those countries, where unlicensed bands of soldiers still made predatory war, and which abounded with armed adventurers of all degrees of infamy. Great therefore was their disappointment, on reaching the village at the foot of the Drachenfels, to find that no boat of any kind was on the point of starting in the desired direction, nor was there any likelihood of such arriving for several days, as the commerce of the Rhine was at that early season scanty and irregular, on account of the obstructions to navigation offered by the floating ice, which was borne towards the sea in cumbrous and at times dangerous masses.

“But,” said the sturdy taverner at whose house they had obtained some refreshment and their principal information, “if ye be pressed for time, there is a fine opportunity now offering itself, as you may see, turning round the bend of Oberwinter above there, and coming towards us as if for your special accommodation.”

Truchses looked anxiously in the direction

pointed out, and saw slowly coming down with the current one of those immense and island-looking rafts of timber, peculiar to the Rhine. Constructed of huge trunks of trees fastened strongly together, the produce of the German forests thus sent forward towards the sea chiefly for the purposes of ship-building. The raft, of enormous length and requiring a crew, so to call it, of several hundred men, presented the appearance of a populous floating village. Many cabins, loosely built of rough planks, were to be seen, with evidences of ample provender for the voyage, in live and dead stock, wine-casks, and every necessary appendage of cookery, on a rude but profuse scale.

Truchses and Agnes looked upon the approaching uncouth and comfortless but secure conveyance ; and then on each other, in silent hesitation.

“ That is the very thing for your purpose,” cried their rough-spoken informant, “ as ye do not seem over-nice or over-rich. The foresters

and river-rangers who compose the company are not, to be sure, the most refined of God's creatures, but they are honest fellows, who pull their huge oars and sing in good measure all day, and sleep at night, too sound to disturb their passengers. I strongly recommend ye to push off in yon little boat and board the raft as it passes; you will easily make a bargain, and not repent of my counsel. Well, well, it is right that every man decides for himself—if his wife will but let him—in this frost-nipped world of our's. Take your choice, good master, of that ready raft or a rough walk. For you have no chance of a boat; and it would cost more than you strike me as being apt to find convenient for a horse and waggon from hence to Westhofen where you say you are bound to. Besides, it is certain that all at this side of the river from Bonn to Paffenmutze are by this time engaged, for the baggage and kitchen-battery of our glorious Elector Ernest, God bless and preserve

his highness! who goes to-day to a great carouse at Schwarzmundorf, to meet the noble Count Nuenar and the rest of the protestant party of the chapter, who have sent in their submission and obtained full pardon."

No more was wanting to decide Truchses on his course. With feelings of fresh bitterness thus involuntarily aroused, and a conviction of the necessity of instant escape from the danger of discovery, his mind was made up. His great objection to the proposed means of voyaging was repugnance to associate his delicate and now more than ever dear helpmate with its rude company and rough accommodation. But one glance from her eyes expressed a whole volume of thought, and Ghebhard now knew that language too well to be in doubt of its full meaning. Within a quarter of an hour they were freely admitted, and lodged in one of the small huts which dotted the surface of the huge raft, as passengers, on moderate terms of expense, and with a promise of the best treatment

within the means of the amphibious proprietors to bestow.

The life of our hero and heroine is now only to be traced in broken fragments of adventures. The continuous flow of narrative would be inappropriate to describe the now turbid current of their career, which is henceforward to be found marked on the page of history or in traditional legends, with brief but graphic sketches.

The raft went on its silent way along the deep broad stream for several days and nights. The cloak-wrapped figures of Ghebbard and Agnes may be pictured by fancy as they sat at the opened casement of their wooden crib; and their minds' workings may be guessed at, as they gazed, he sternly she placidly, on the passing objects of the river's leftward bank. Towns, palaces, churches, extensive forests and the broad champaign, all once his own! The living beings, too, who so lately owned his sway and paid him homage, now as indifferent

to his fate as they were unconscious of his presence ! It was a sad and serious trial. But, like all those which went before, he bore it with the lofty resignation worthy a great mind. He often sat for hours during that dreary voyage, conscious that Agnes was beside him, but, saving that sure tie to his present existence, lost in a wide abstraction, as he mechanically listened to the regular splash of the hundred ponderous oars which served as a mighty rudder to keep the raft in its right course, and to the hymns of simple melody which the navigators sang in wild yet well-timed chorus. At length the territory of Cologne was passed—and the last steeple of its frontier village faded on Ghebhard's aching sight—he turned his looks to the long and dreary flat that spread out at either side of the river on his forward course—and he bade adieu for ever to even the recollection of what he had lost, which until then he had lingeringly yet unconsciously clung to.

The raft had now reached the country of Cleves. It had been found frequently necessary to pause and even to stop for a whole day together, from the serious obstacles and the dangers at times presented by the accumulated blocks of ice, and the unwieldy dimension of this ark, from which our woe-sick wanderers had scarcely heart enough to send out one faint hope, to seek for a token that the flood of their misfortunes had subsided.

The desolate aspect of the country now proved that war was familiar to its plains. Abandoned villages, a hut or castle in ruins, an absence of all the cheerful signs of peace and prosperity, were the now constant proofs; and at times a roving band of marauders stared at the raft from the river's banks, and gazed with hungry eyes at its stores of provender, the seizure of which their scanty numbers forbade them to attempt. But one night, after the great grappling-irons and chains had moored the timber-raft to the bank, and all its nume-

rous occupants with the exception of the small night-watch having retired to their huts, a sudden and irresistible attack was made on it by a numerous detachment from one of the independent bands, calling themselves soldiers of the faith and auxiliaries of Spain. Plunder was the sole object of those brigand warriors. Ere daylight every possible object of utility was carried on shore; and then in the mere wantonness of rapine, the destroyers loosened the cords and grapplings which had bound the timbers together and in a few hours the whole collected labours of many months, the product of large capital and great industry, the subsistence of hundreds was let loose upon the chafed waters. The loud lamentations of the poor foresters who had embarked their all in this enterprise and the more violent wailings of the women and children who formed part of the cargo, were only matter of mockery, and provocation to abuse and ill treatment, on the part of the spoliators. And as Ghebhard and

Agnes stood on the damp bleak shore, and saw the planks break asunder from the cabin which had for so many days given them shelter and security, they felt as though another pang of suffering had severed them from their last association of home.

The persons of the raft's company, our hero and heroine being included in that levelling epithet, became next the objects of spoliation. They were rifled of every available thing in money, dress, or trinkets. The nature of the latter found upon Agnes and Truchses, and their whole bearing under the operations of their plunderers showed them to be persons, formerly at least, of more elevated station than they passed for. But in those days of rapine, disguise and false pretences were the common shifts of so many high-born unfortunates, that it attracted little curiosity, although in the present instance it secured some small consideration at the hands of the ruffian adventurers. Truchses was offered protection and subsistence as long as

he chose to remain in company with the band. A rapier was given him for his protection against other robbers, a horse lent for the accommodation of Agnes, they were served with daily rations of such coarse provisions as the marauders succeeded in procuring for themselves ; and he was thus spared the necessity of robbing for his existence, as many of the destitute foresters and boatmen were obliged to do, while they followed the route of their captors across the territory of Brabant.

Holland was still the great point of all Ghebhard's views. He found it now impossible to penetrate to that land of hard-won liberty by the Belgian frontier, which was strongly occupied by the army of the Duke of Parma both in garrisons and in the field, now that the winter began to break and the season for warlike operations being again at hand. The only feasible chance was to the gain coast of Flanders and thence by some fortunate accident contrive a sea-passage to a Dutch port.

With this object all hardships were borne with patience and courage, the sufferers never losing the reciprocal anxiety which kept each in activity and taught them endurance, solely for the sake of the other.

After many hardships and risks, the greater part of Belgium was traversed in this way, before Truchses found an opportunity of breaking off from the companionship of his soldier protectors; and it was owing to the rude sense of honour of one of those that he obtained the restitution of his money and one of Agnes's diamond rings, which he now carefully secreted as a reserve fund for some future emergency. By winding paths of perilous adventure the wanderers at length reached that part of Flanders between Lille and the Pays de Calais, afterwards joined to France by the conquests of Louis XIII.; and they were so far working their way slowly towards the coast, when, almost worn out by fatigue and agitation—for his still active mind now suffered tortures in

the contemplation of his wife's privations—he was taken suddenly ill, by an attack of the deadly malady of the low countries, known centuries later to mourning and indignant England by the title of the “Walcheren fever.”

The first assault of this insidious pest was sharp but brief; and after a few days' suffering the patient arose well, as he and his fond partner vainly thought, and they made light of this feeble effort of the climate against his robust and manly frame. The scene of this, the first illness ever endured by Ghebhard Truchses, was the ruin-remnants of Therouenne, the ancient capital of a wide district in ages gone by, but which the fierce vengeance of the Emperor Charles V. had some thirty years previously, utterly razed out from the list of cities. Scarcely a stone was left standing upon another of all that formed the ramparts, the gates, the buildings of this once populous town; and of its thousands of inhabitants not a score

were now left to linger on the site of their former dwellings, and find mementos of past enjoyments in the present desolation. It was in a wretched house of entertainment, in the waste ground which had been occupied by one of the former suburbs, and in which Ghebhard and Agnes had made their resting-place at this stage of their pilgrimage, that he sank under the first onset of his malady. And as he recovered sufficient strength to walk daily out in the reviving air of spring time, leaning on his help-mate's arm, the scattered ruins were the favourite places of resort. There they could draw at every turn new lessons of resignation and benevolence ; for the reflection that they were not alone in their destitution taught them to feel for others through the medium of their own distress.

As Truchses became daily convalescent he and Agnes used to prolong their evening rambles, and sometimes the bright May-moon caught them still lingering in the ruins,

walking on some level place where the smooth sward covered, perhaps, the site of a palace or a temple, or sitting on some pillar's fragment, and gazing on the fantastic forms shadowed out on the earth by the remnants of crumbling walls. As they thus sat one evening, later than usual, tempted by the mild air which almost breathed in summer softness, a thick cloud suddenly obscured the moon, and, warned by the darkness that it was actual night, they were about to retire to their poor and cheerless lodging, when their attention was excited by the cautious advance of two men, lighted by a small lantern which one of them drew out from beneath his cloak. He was lank and more than middle-aged, of unprepossessing looks, half mystic, half miserly. His long beard and thin moustachios of almost flaxen hair gave a peculiar air of weakness to a countenance which was otherwise strongly marked with a harsh but still vigorous cast. Truchses at once knew

this person from his general appearance to be English.

His companion was a decided contrast. He was short and thick, bloated and rubicund, with twinkling eyes and a most uncomely visage. He seemed half drunk, and was supported in his tottering passage across the fragments of stone and brickwork, by a thin iron rod, which was too long for the purposes of a walking-staff and a curious appurtenance to so strange looking a figure.

“Now, Edward,” said the first mentioned of those associates, in English, which was understood by Truchses, but not by Agnes, “now strike the divining rod three times with a vigorous stroke—let it tingle to the earth’s bowels, and rouse up Madimi, my old familiar. This is the place.”

“I doubt that, good doctor, and my learned master,” replied the other. “No man could have been fool enough to bury treasures under such a villainous mass of rubbish—and as for Ma-

dimi, he won't come till you pull out the crystal from your pouch."

"Here it is, unbeliever! Place it to thy bloodshot eye and tell me what thou seest."

"See! why I see flames and fiery tongues, but no angels to-night. Holloa! holloa, my master. There, they are coming up and out fast and faster—but I cannot see them clearly yet for the mist. The incantation, doctor, the incantation!"

The other then chaunted in a harsh and monotonous tone :—

"Per vertutem illorum qui invocant nomen tuum,
Hermeli, mitte nobis tres angelos.

Are they coming?"

"No angels, no angels."

"Ah, how could it be expected in thy lewd and deboshed presence? Tell quickly, good Edward, what dost thou see?"

"I see fourteen creatures of divers evil-favoured shapes, some like monkeys, some like dogs, some very hairy monstrous men. They are

scratching each other by the face. Ha, there is Madimi. He brands the fourteen in the forehead—they go downward, downward, downward! There comes a thing like a great wind and plucks them away by the feet.”

“How dost feel good Edward?”

“Marvellous light and giddy i’ the brain. I seem to be empty and a burning thirst scorches my throat and palate.”

“Thou art eased of a great burthen Edward. I will speak a word for thee to Madimi—*Gilde pragma Kures hilech*.”

“What is that to say, oh, most erudite doctor?”

“Why, *volumus his in nostris habitare*.”

“Humph! does it promise a gift?”

“Oh, thou profane one, thy sordid notion drives the spirit away. Vale, Vale, Madimi!”*

* For original specimens of this kind of jargon between Dr. Dee and his follower or associate Edward Kelly and the spirits they raised, the reader must consult the folio volume of Dee’s Visions, edited by Meric Casaubon, 1659. But other and more rational records of his erudition and in-

The bewildered novice on whom this mystification was practised here stumbled and fell among the rubbish ; and while his companion endeavoured to pick him up, the arrival of a third person added to Ghebhard's curiosity and proved a relief to the burlesque of the scene. This was a young man of fine and showy person, richly habited according to the luxurious fashion of the times, though evidently associated with the others in some business of real or pretended mystery. Leaving the fallen man to sprawl his way from among the rubbish as well as he could, the elder actor in the foregoing colloquy gave his whole attention to some whispered communication from the newcomer. The latter at length said loud enough to be heard by Truchses,

dustury are to be found in the Cottonian and Ashmodean collections. A minute description of his person (in which fancy perhaps had a greater hand than fact) is given in Spindler's wild and powerful work *Der Bastard*, in which this celebrated necromancer, astrologer, and political intriguer plays a much more important part than in our tale.

“Come this way then, doctor, and we can talk it over.”

“I am ready,” replied the other, “to listen to your lordship’s advice, for though young in years you are indeed of a precocious capacity for political intrigue.”

“Hold, gentlemen !” said Truchses,—and as he spoke and came forward a step or two, the old man lifted up his lantern, the young man clapped his hand on his sword—“I must not overhear ye further. I understand your language, and would not listen to your secrets.”

“Sir,” said the young stranger, after a slight pause and with an air of chivalric good breeding, “I would not wish a secret of mine own in better keeping than that of a man so honourable and delicate as this conduct proves you. And did not the purport of our conversation touch on higher matters than mere personal concerns I would not scruple to communicate it to you.”

At this too candid admission, the old man

severely pinched his companion's arm, and in his turn he addressed Truchses, keenly eyeing him and Agnes under the light which he contrived to throw in their faces.

“Yes, worthy stranger, we have a serious mission to fulfil, in propitiating the good angels who watch over the labours of the great in faith but weak in spirit—perhaps you are here on the same purposes as ourselves?”

“I doubt it, doctor—you will excuse my familiarly giving you your title. You seek treasures, and in striving to raise a spirit have as yet only succeeded in throwing down a man,” replied Truchses, with a smile—a faint one, for he suddenly felt the concentrated effects of his imprudent exposure to the night air, in a violent fever fit.

“Whatever be *your* purpose,” said the young stranger, “you at least have succeeded better than my venerable friend, for you *have* an angel by your side.”

Agnes blushed at the emphatic looks which

accompanied the compliment, though she did not understand the words it was conveyed in.

“You are right, sir—she is, indeed,” said Ghebhard, who had learned the humility of permitting a compliment—even a common place one—to be paid to his wife, a thing which in his palmy days of pride he would not have suffered. But he also felt that in present circumstances it would be hard to keep from her whatever might come of good, even so poor an offering as a phrase of gallantry. He translated the stranger’s flattering words. She calmly listened, and replied,

“Then let me prove a guardian angel, my beloved, and lead you home. You look flushed, yet you tremble like an aspen. Come my husband—wish a good night to these gentlemen, and say for me that I am sorry my ignorance of their language forces me to do as much by proxy.”

“Madam,” said the young stranger, in courtly French, “although I do not speak *your*

language sufficiently to express more than the merest phrase of common place—and I would not willingly address such to you—I know it enough to comprehend your courtesy, and you will pardon me perhaps for taking it for granted that you understand that which I now make the medium of my respectful leave-taking.”

A hurried acknowledgment, spoken in French as pure as his own, and some graceful expressions of courtesy convinced him of what he had already believed, that Agnes and her companion were persons of station far different from what their dress announced. Perceiving the evident suffering of Truchses, who required more effective aid than the arm of his agitated wife, the stranger proffered his assistance across the rough impediments of the path. It was accepted; and as they moved along (the elder man, with the inebriate neophyte having already retired from the scene) Agnes expressed her grateful sense of his kindness, so unexpected to persons he had never seen before.

“In truth, madam,” replied he, “it is a service scarcely meriting thanks, though it be done by one who had never till now beheld you ; yet I cannot quite believe such to be the case, for if the limner has not done great flattery to another person, I have seen duplicates of your likeness, though perhaps not meant for you.”

“You utter an enigma, sir, which I cannot propound,” said Agnes.

“I can, though,” observed Ghebhard, “my kind young supporter here alludes to portraits of the prisoner of Fotheringay.”

“I do, indeed”—said the stranger—“and though I never saw the beautiful and unhappy Queen of Scots, I can now fancy her before me, as she might have looked and moved some dozen years back.”

“Sir, the resemblance is an oft-remarked and singular one—and perhaps not much less true in fortune than in person.”

Truchses spoke the latter part of this

sentence in an under-tone. The stranger caught the words notwithstanding; and he could not suppress a sudden start, and a stare at the lovely woman who caused his emotion, and whom the broad moonlight now showed more plainly than even his companion's lantern had done, and he involuntarily exclaimed,

“Yes! there can be no doubt of it.”

Ghebhard Truchses was the next morning in the violent paroxysm of a bad relapse. The strangers had, fortunately for him—if the prolonging of his life was now indeed a blessing—humanity on one hand and skill on the other. The younger at twenty years of age, had evidently the upper-hand with his companion of three score. All his suggestions were acted on by his experienced companion, with a deferential acquiescence which he strove to gloss over into the appearance of friendly condescension. But the youth evidently knew his own influence. He had all the ready-formed manners of the great world. He avowed to

Agnes that the interest which she had excited—for he knew her from her far-bruited likeness to Mary Stuart—had caused him to put off his departure from the neighbourhood of this chance-meeting. He spoke freely, but not too incautiously, of his and his companion's affairs, which he confessed to be of a political tendency, and by no means of the absurd nature which the necessity of concealment had forced them to pretend. He revealed the names of his companions, Doctor Dee and Edward Kelly—but he studiously concealed his own, which the others did not attempt to betray. He ordered the doctor to devote his whole skill to the cure of Ghebhard, and the order was obeyed with alacrity and success; for though Dee was not by profession a medical man yet his vast knowledge and extraordinary practice embraced physic in the widely extended range of scientific study.

Several days of constant intercourse created as much intimacy between Agnes and the

young man as she could venture to allow herself with a person who could not or would not reveal his name and situation, while he had become from her own admission well acquainted with her's. Dee had called him "my lord," in Ghebhard's hearing, and he did not deny his title. The very nature of his rank was a further cause for reserve; yet there was something so frank, so cordial, and so elegant in his whole conduct and manner, that she could not withhold her confidence or entirely conceal her admiration. He professed warmly yet seriously his sympathy with her and Ghebhard's misfortunes, and he spoke in a tone of confident conviction of his future power to help them, in a way of tenfold value to his then scanty means of service.

In the mean time Ghebhard recovered from this new attack. It lasted, like the former one, about ten days, but it left him more enfeebled and more susceptible to another. This however he knew not; or if his skilful leech gave him

warning to that effect, he forgot it in the flushed animation of returning health. He had frequently seen and conversed with the young stranger, in the hours of exemption from intense pain and the debilitating symptoms of his illness. There was nothing contagious in it. It is the curse of the climate, not the infection of nature. Truchses had therefore no direct apprehension for his wife or his new friend, as the penalty of their care of him, and so upheld, he made light of his malady. The comfort of a generous mind to feel for and with one in illness and distress is an enjoyment beyond price. The delight of affording sympathy and succour to the unfortunate and meritorious comes next to it. No man is truly destitute while he can possess the first, none wholly worthless till he is insensible to the latter.

Truchses was once more able to go into the air and take exercise—and thus again in the way of fresh imprudence and a new attack.

But before this happened—and the intervals were regular between each relapse—he had by the unwearied care of his young friend, for such he fully felt and acknowledged him, gained securely the great object of his late exertions, a conveyance to the coast; and he had taken places on board a country vessel engaged in the trade then winked at between the still hostile states of Flanders and Holland. The young man, whose influence had procured safe conduct and protection through the military district they traversed, accompanied our hero and heroine to the sea-side; and at the very moment before the sailing of the little craft to which they now committed themselves, he took a ring from his finger and presented it to Agnes.

“This, madam,” said he, with all the noble emotion of youthful sensibility, “this is the valued token of a lost mother’s love. Let me offer it to you, not merely as a remembrance of friendship but as a solemn pledge of utmost

service if ever the time should come, as I fully reckon, that I may have power equal to my will to do good to your noble husband or yourself. My prayer to Heaven is that you may never need my aid, but that you may find a harbour of honourable safety in the free land you are now bound to, and with the great and good man who rules over it. But if all else fail I shall be stanch and steady—depend on me—and the ring which is the warrant of my truth may upon inquiry lead you to a knowledge of the donor. Farewel, my friends ! Heaven bless and protect you—Farewel, farewell !”

Truchses repeated the warm-hearted leave-taking, but Agnes could do no more than make signs of her deep-felt concurrence in all her husband said. “Alas ! alas ! for the world’s wanderers,” thought she, “to meet chance friends only to lose them when made ! to have no time to form a lasting attachment—no certainty of ever again seeing those we love or

wish to love ! Oh, better to settle in some narrow nook, with one or two firm-bound companions, whose interests, feelings and tastes grow into fellowship if they are not by nature the same. Why is not this *our* lot ? But Heaven's will be done !”

Three days more brought the fugitives to the little town of Delft safe and unharmed. The young stranger had given them a supply of money, for which Truchses insisted on his accepting Agnes's ring, as security. Delicacy forbade his refusing the pledge ; and in his romantic feeling of regard and admiration—but let no reader be mistaken, there was not a spark of *love* in it—he heartily hoped it would never be redeemed.

CHAPTER XI.

THE arrival at Delft was indeed like sailing into a safe harbour after enduring the worst fury of the wind and waves. The gratitude of Ghebhard and Agnes, first to Heaven and next to their invaluable English friend, was very great. They felt as if the term of their long suffering was now reached. As they moved along the canal in the little boat from Rotterdam, where they had first made land, they felt the dull, flat scene to be the perfection of natural beauty, for it promised rest, the great object of their longings. The trim formality of Delft itself, the narrow quays and quiet canal, the grave-looking and unmolested storks

perched on the chimney-tops, or floating on broad wings over the town, all struck them as most original but happy symbols of the fate they had before them; and the contrast between all they now saw with the insecurity of the country they had lately passed through, and the perturbed state of their own, filled them with a pious and delighted wonder.

The reception they met with from the Prince of Orange and his amiable wife, the daughter of Coligny, was one of tender and benevolent welcome. William of Nassau was a model in domestic life as well as a hero in politics and war. His calmness of mind and unfailing courage, his clear views, his public energy, his personal moderation have no parallels in modern history, except Washington in fact, and La Fayette in theory. By such a man as this, a character like that of Truchses was sure to be appreciated; while the beauty, the youth and the misfortunes of Agnes formed a passport to his best sympathies. He immediately

gave them apartments in his house, and for the first few days after their arrival, all went on smoothly, happily, and well. But the demon of disease was deep lodged in Ghebhard's constitution, and the fatal neighbourhood of stagnant waters and low plains brought its malignant agencies into full action once more. Scarcely installed in the mansion of his immortal friend and protector, he was again seized with a relapse of fever more violent than his former attacks. He had now all possible aid from science and every accessory comfort that could assuage his sufferings. He therefore bore them with his usual fortitude, and he looked confidently forward to a prompt enjoyment of the society of his noble-hearted host, to a complete renovation of his own health, and the final accomplishment of his worldly hopes.

These soothing expectations soon met an afflicting overthrow; and all liberal Europe had quickly to mourn an event that posterity

itself looks back on with dismay and horror. On the 10th of June 1584, a couple of days after Ghebhard's renewed illness, William of Nassau with his wife, and his sister the Princess of Swartzenberg, were sitting after dinner, Agnes being as usual in close attendance on her sick husband above, when an individual demanded an audience from the stadtholder, who, with the usual simplicity of conduct which greatness only may adopt, immediately rose from table and left the room. In a minute the report of a pistol was heard. The wife and sister rushed to the door, and found the glorious liberator of his country, the immortal patriot, weltering in his blood. The assassin's hand was more steady and his aim more sure than those of the other villain who some years previously had inflicted a grievous wound on the prince. In a few seconds the great, good man expired, his last words being "Oh, my poor country !"

This important drama of history is but a

brief episode in our tale. All the prospects of Ghebhard were now again overcast. His protector was no more. The public confusion consequent on his murder, the youthful age of his son and successor Prince Maurice then only sixteen, and the exigencies of the national affairs left no chance of attention being paid to the interests of a ruined and health-broken man like Truchses. He was not, however, left destitute by the government on which devolved the heavy burthen of public affairs. He was allowed the means of subsistence and a secure residence in the country of his adoption ; and had his constitution not been broken by his frequent-recurring disease he might have quietly run the rest of his course among a people then ennobled by the finest traits of heroism. In the intervals of his illness he travelled about from place to place for change of air, its greatest assuagement ; or when at rest he gave himself up wholly to the varied literary studies for which he had been in early

life so distinguished, and he wrote much in prose and verse, philosophy mixing with poetry in bright and serious combination. In all things, at all times, Agnes was his consolation and his counsellor. To her good taste, her steady judgment, her subdued enthusiasm he owed much; and every day brought to light new treasures from a mind that could embrace all subjects, and on which every fresh circumstance produced a new effect.

Full five years of calm existence thus rolled on, an apparent blank in our heroine's life, but filled up in reality with many a solace. Ghebbard had become acclimated, (to adopt a foreign word) and the deleterious elements of fog and damp at length found him proof against their power. The elastic spring of life was gone for ever. The fine flush of health had left his cheek. His brilliant look was dimmed. But his mind was unimpaired, his temper softened, and his knowledge of mankind enlarged. And thus he might have gone on, had

not the instinct longing for home, the love of the father-land, where so little was left to claim his love, still kept fast hold of him. He had maintained a constant intercourse by letter with his brother; and Agnes on her part with both of her's, as soon as the sanctuary was reached whence there was no danger of compromising their friends. The project of a return to Germany, and of procuring some benefice in any of the protestant states, was thus always kept alive; but without the interference of some powerful monarch in Ghebhard's favour, no chance of success appeared.

Agnes had her mind's eye constantly fixed on England; and she watched anxiously the eventful news which every new year brought from that great country. She looked on the character of Elizabeth with a mixture of astonishment and fear. The execution of Mary Stuart in 1587, the defeat of the armada in the following year, the mixed ingredients of the mind that commanded the first and presided

over the latter, formed an appalling subject for female contemplation ; and Agnes scarcely knew whether to attempt or shrink from an appeal to the virgin queen on behalf of her husband and herself. Bitterly did she regret having lost the young Englishman's ring, in the confusion of removal from Delft immediately after the Prince of Orange's murder, and in the midst of Ghebhard's cruel sufferings both of mind and body. She was thus deprived of all clue to the renewal of the acquaintanceship on which she had so much reckoned. Of Doctor Dee she had made frequent inquiries through the English residents in Holland, but could only learn vague reports of his total degradation and disgrace, and that from having been the prime agent in various political missions, and even the instructor of Elizabeth herself in the far-sought mysteries of astrology, he had sunk into such complete insignificance as to be quite lost to the world.

Great then was Agnes's pleasure on ex-

amining one day a miscellaneous collection of papers, trinkets, and fragments (such as are common to all travellers who often change their abode and who live in a constant alternation of losing, seeking, and finding) to discover the very identical ring, so long deplored, and so simply coming to light that it was only wonderful it could have been so often overlooked. Agnes did not lose time in surmises as to the cause of its disappearance, nor did she quite attribute its discovery to supernatural interference. Yet she felt as if her husband ought to have looked on it with his old respect for omens; and she lamented deeply the indifference with which he received her joyous intimation of this good luck, and the air of chilling doubt with which he listened to her sanguine expectations from the now probable discovery of their English friend. For the first time, she regretted the utter change that had passed over his once ardent and superstitious temperament, and she now felt sure

that he had indeed lost all hope in fortune, all confidence in man.

Elated far beyond her usual constitutional wont, she repaired to an individual well versed in the intricate combinations of medals seals, devices, and heraldic bearings, and she submitted to his inspection her mystic token of certain good to come. Her heart bounded with hitherto unknown joy when this cunning antiquary pronounced the bauble to be a signet ring of the ancient and noble house of Devereux, clearly cut, and plainly bearing the family arms — the three torteauxes in chief; the talbolt's head argent, eared gules; the reindeer gorged with a ducal coronet; the motto "*virtutes comes invidia*;" and when, upon due consideration, there could be no doubt but that it had belonged to and was given to Agnes by no less a personage than Robert Earl of Essex, the then all-powerful favourite of Elizabeth of England! Every inquiry confirmed this glad conviction, for her recollections of the

young stranger tallied perfectly with what she now learned of his age and his personal appearance, as well as with what was known to all Europe of his chivalric and romantic character.

It was indeed this remarkable man who had so generously and so disinterestedly interposed between our hero and heroine, and the fate under which but for him Ghebhard had in all probability succumbed. Essex was on that occasion a voluntary associate with Doctor Dee, in the last of his many secret political missions to Flanders, and principally to the Duke of Parma then governor-general of the Spanish possessions in the Netherlands. The young ambition of Essex had even then aimed at the succession to the post of favourite, so unworthily held by the craven recreant Leicester, and though scorning the character to which his own was in every way repugnant, he on all possible occasions followed his example in conduct which could not compromise his honour and might make his fortune. He felt that the

attainment of political knowledge, and most particularly foreign information, were the main accomplishments for him who would stand first in the favour of the queen. He therefore easily made the acquaintance of Dee, and by irresistible inducements persuaded him to associate him in his secret doings. Dee, who was a mercenary as well as a clever man, who carried his charlatanism in his peculiar line as far perhaps as Jerome Scotus himself in his, had foresight enough to mark the rising influence of Essex before it was evident to the public eye; like that rarely-organized individual in our own days, who has the faculty of knowing the distant approach of a ship, by some strange sympathy of vision with the light's refraction, long before the object is seen by others on the horizon.

The sagacity of Essex, in his stolen and profoundly secret visits to the continent with his accomplished tutor, was turned to invaluable account as he became more intimately

known to his royal mistress. His advancement to the highest possible place in her favour was rapid beyond parallel, after the death of Leicester in 1588. His chivalrous conduct in the Lisbon expedition, the following year, seemed the crowning circumstance of his influence; but it was not until his duel with Sir Charles Blount in 1590 that the tyrant fondness of "the sweete floure of amiable virginitie," (as our motto has it) found full vent; and it was just at this critical epoch of Essex's life and fortunes that Agnes made the discovery which we have just recorded. She did not hesitate one moment in the course to be pursued. Relying with unwonted enthusiasm on the generous sincerity of Essex, and with undoubting certainty on his influence with Elizabeth, she resolved to set off at once for England, to lay at the feet of the great queen through the intercession of her irresistible favourite, the claims of Ghebbard Truchses on her protection and influence; and visions of

long happiness to come floated in magic succession on our heroine's not easily excited brain.

The peremptory tenderness with which she made known her intention to her husband admitted no denial or remonstrance on his part. He offered none; for he could not avoid being tinged with the bright colouring which shed itself so broadly over her hopes. And so, with brief preparation, and an elated heart, she proceeded under Ghebhard's convoy to the sea-side, and took her passage in a trading vessel bound from Amsterdam to London. For the first time in her life she was now a voyager alone and under Heaven's protection; and for the first time since his marriage Ghebhard was now left behind, to a sad and solitary home, only cheered by the memory of his wife's unrivalled excellence, and the passionate longing for her return, which seemed to keep her at all moments present before his eyes, as she was irrecoverably fixed in his heart.

After the lapse of three days, not remarkable

either for the infliction of or the exemption from sufferings, such as a sea voyage is ever marked by to the unaccustomed and delicate, Agnes found herself, with wonder and delight, far up the river Thames ; and in due time she was safely landed on the populous quay of old London.

CHAPTER XII.

THE buoyancy of mind which Agnes felt on her own account prevented the depression which she might perhaps have sunk under, had she only dwelt on the chances of success, or the possibility of disappointment, founded on the character of the extraordinary woman on whose decision her own and her husband's fate now depended. But alive in the most acute degree to the sentiment of awe, and the repugnant shrinking which such a character as Elizabeth's must even in that age have inspired in any truly feminine mind, she was far more disposed to rest on the certainty of the steady friendship to be looked to from Essex, and she

had not the remotest idea of anything standing in the way of its exercise. In this mood she suffered none of the minor agitation which in a less inspiring tone of feeling might have attended on the novelty of her situation, alone in a strange land, for her one Dutch hand-maiden could be of small protection in necessity, and liable to all the doubtful construction so likely to be put on the conduct of a beautiful and unprotected foreigner, whose avowed purpose was a visit to the most gallant and powerful nobleman in England. Her own industry and the assiduous instruction of her husband had removed one great obstruction to the execution of her enterprise. She had during her residence in Holland learned English, which she had found frequent occasions of speaking, with various diplomatic agents, merchants and others who constantly passed over from London to the Low Countries, as well as with English officers in the military service of Prince Maurice. She could express herself with fluency in the most

intricate conversation, and understand perfectly even much of the idiomatic quaintness with which the language then abounded. No sooner, therefore, had she passed through the necessary forms on landing, being duly provided with all the required documents, than she made inquiries at the hostel where she engaged a lodging, for the best and readiest way of proceeding to Essex House, where she soon ascertained that the wounded but now convalescent earl was to be found.

“Why, mistress,” replied the worshipful host of the Rose and Falcon, “the best way and the readiest is to put your comely person into one of the boats that wait at the Tower stairs hard by, and to row up the river with the tide which will be running fast westward, for an hour to come. Once at Essex House, those handsome features will be a sure passport to his lordship, and beshrew me ! I much doubt if he will be in a hurry to let them out o’ the portal as fast as they will ha’ gotten into the

presence-chamber. But be satisfied my mistress, you will have as good quarters there, to say the least, as those you have left behind you with the mynheers of Amsterdam, or as you could expect even with your humble servant, Roger Ryecroft, host of the Rose and Falcon."

Agnes fully comprehended these inuendoes, but her mind was not to be ruffled nor its purport turned aside; and the shrewd publican saw at once that the blush on her cheek was neither of guilt nor shame. He consequently gave the most obsequious attention to her wants and wishes; and was pleased at her expressing her intention of occupying the chamber allotted to her, into which she ordered her baggage to be deposited, as a proof that her visit to Essex House was not intended to be of the lasting nature he had surmised.

When Agnes re-appeared, after having taken some refreshment, modestly clad in a suit of black, with few ornaments, and those not chosen for gaudy display, Roger Ryecroft was struck

with still greater admiration and renewed respect; and he escorted her to the stairs, and saw her safe into the boat which was one of his own selection; and gave strict charge to the boatman, who bore the badge of the Westminster Water Company, to take especial care of the worshipful lady who entrusted herself to his skill and civility, intimating that she was of high quality and of much consideration in the eyes of his noble eminence “the queen’s earl,” (as the public emphatically called him) whom she was going to visit.

The residence of the Earl of Essex with its gardens occupied the situation of the street that at present bears his name, and had two separate entrances, one opening to the Strand, and the other on the river. It was by the latter that Agnes made her approach, with a light step, a confident spirit, but a palpitating heart. No misgiving as to the earl’s remembrance of her crossed her mind; but she reflected that he was no longer a boy of undeveloped aspirations,

but a man, whose full grown greatness made an abrupt and uncereemonious intrusion upon him a somewhat hazardous step. His pride might have grown in proportion with his power ; and he might after the first cordial recognition look on her perhaps as too bold and too troublesome a petitioner. But the risk, thought she, must now be run, and she had only to trust to chance for the result of her enterprize. But no notion crossed her mind of any personal feeling mixing with the views of Essex, either as to his consideration of her, or as to his opinion relative to her conduct with regard to him.

She was received and admitted at “ the water-gate ” with respectful assiduity by the porter and serving-men on duty there—all the establishment of Essex House being taught to give a most gracious reception to every visitor of the fair sex—and she proceeded, under the guidance of one of the badged and liveried servitors, straightway through the gardens to the mansion Introduced by him into a lodge close to

the garden portico, which led directly to the steward's apartments. She was accommodated with a cushioned chair in a private chamber, looking out on the way by which she had approached. The old gray-headed functionary, who occupied the post of keeper of "the ladies' lodge," was in every respect suited to his situation. A tone of court-bred propriety distinguished his manners. He asked no impertinent questions, gave no intrusive glances, nor seemed to have any curiosity as to "the whereabouts" of the female inquirers after his noble master; but sending his grand daughter, a neat lively girl, to attend on our heroine during his absence, he hobbled off to announce to Sir Gilley Merrick, the steward, the new-comer who declined giving her name, but required, if possible, to have speech with the earl.

Whatever might be the outward show of deference paid to the sex by the servitors of the gallant Essex, there was naturally no restriction in their conversational comments, when out

of the presence of each fair expectant who from various motives sought his patronage. The pompous steward therefore was in no hurry to grant an audience to the unattended, modestly-adorned, and foreign-accented lady whom the lodge-keeper had described with his accustomed minuteness. Essex was, besides, fully occupied in receiving the visits of his many friends, who now, it being after the dinner hour, poured in from both entrances to beset the household with inquiries for "the very dear and noble lord," for whom the queen's tenderness was well-known to be overflowing during the last two days, though she had affected a good deal of satisfaction at the news of his discomfiture and the check to his pride, so lately received at the hands of Sir Charles Blount. Agnes was therefore left for a considerable time in a somewhat annoying state of suspense, which was however made lighter from the kind and lively attentions of the old man's granddaughter, who talked incessantly, and amused her not a

little with the gossiping particulars of the earl's doings, the late duel, and reports of various kinds connected with the court, and the favourite's influence over the queen, magnified if possible by the garrulous girl, in honour of the noble house of Essex to which she considered herself a very graceful appendage.

She also pointed out to Agnes among the visitors who came in their barges and approached the house by the gardens, the Earl of Southampton, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, Littleton of Frankley, Sir Charles Davers, and others of note among the earl's particular friends. So that our heroine became in a couple of hours acquainted with the persons, and initiated into the histories of some of the *élite* of English rank and fashion.

At length Sir Gilley Merrick himself appeared before our heroine; and, with a most patronizing tone of condescension, and with apologies for the delay, inquired her pleasure. This was easily explained—it was but a repeti-

tion of her former demand. The steward made a considerable demur on her declining to give her name—which she did from the absolute motive of not knowing what name to give, with a chance of its being intelligible to Essex. That by which she and her husband had been known during their melancholy sojourn at Therouenne had doubtless escaped his memory, and it was at any rate too ignoble and harsh-sounding for the ears polite of his retainers; and she did not like to commit to light comment either her husband's or her own real appellation. She faltered and hesitated, as the inquisitive steward pressed his request as being indispensable to her being admitted to the earl's presence. But on her intimating that she possessed a token which would no doubt prove a passport, and producing the signet-ring, the worthy knight changed his tone; and, believing her now to be beyond scrutiny a lady high in his master's favour, he assured her of his profound devotion to her service, and of his anxiety to facilitate by

all means the object of her desire. He therefore escorted her forthwith to an apartment in his own suite of rooms, a positive promotion from her waiting station in the ladies' lodge. Here she had, however, again to endure a considerable delay, while Sir Gilley retired to consult with Henry Cuff, the earl's confidential secretary, as to the feasibility of presenting the ring while Essex was so surrounded with his loving gossips and inquiring friends.

Left to herself again, Agnes began to suffer an undefined anxiety as to the termination of her adventure. With so many ceremonious difficulties between her and a mere audience of the master of all the state appurtenances which she had seen already, "What," thought she, "may not the man himself now be? How self-proud, how presumptuous! and, oh God, if after all I am wrong in my conjecture—if the young man who gave me the ring was some impostor—or even though a man of the rank we suppose him, still *not* Essex! What more

likely than that the pretended necromancer Dee should have been leagued with some associate rogue, who, possessed by chance of the signet-ring, has made use of it to carry on the easier some scheme of deceit? But then, his noble bearing, his frank demeanour, his generous words! could all these have been assumed? Oh, how rashly I have undertaken a perilous task! Alas! my husband, where was your once proud energy, your prompt perception, that would have seen at a glance the risk I was rushing on, and forbade this wild adventure!"

Before this new and startling train of doubt could reach a height of serious agitation, the knight-steward re-appeared, with another person of a determined yet dissimulating mien, whose grave suit of black contrasted strongly with Sir Gilley's flashy attire, and who was formally presented by the latter, as "his good friend Master Henry Cuff, the very breath of the earl's most marvellous secrets, and a young

man of the most approved discretion and eminent fitness for all confidential undertakings."

The subject of this panegyric seemed to take small heed of it; yet he bore it out in a measure by the matured and cautious terms in which he conveyed to Agnes his lord's earnest request that she would forthwith honour him with her presence in his withdrawing-room, lameness from an accident preventing his hurrying to Sir Gilley Merrick's apartments, to offer his homage and conduct her to a more worthy place of reception.

"But sir," asked Agnes with a faltering voice, "are you sure that his lordship recognised the ring and remembered her to whom it was given?"

"Madam, my good lord never forgets a pledge, nor is any he who has had the happy fortune to see you once likely to forget his good luck."

"Nay sir, but tell me truly what did his lordship say on getting back his signet-ring?"

“ Pray, madam, let my duty be my excuse for putting forth no words of my honoured master’s, but those he bade me to speak to you in his name. His lordship waits your coming with impatience. Let me have the happiness of tending you into his presence.”

Agnes still hesitated. She knew not what question more to put, to relieve her anxiety. She trembled with the dreadful belief that she was going to meet a perfect stranger—yet how to retreat? Once more her natural courage and graceful self-confidence protected her ; she felt her conscience clear ; and relying on Heaven’s protection, happen what might, she moved forward with a calm and steady step escorted by the secretary and the steward. After ascending a flight of stairs and then traversing several corridors, saloons, and anti-rooms, all furnished in the most profusely luxurious style, they reached the private withdrawing-room of the Earl of Essex. The door was opened by an attendant groom of the chambers. Sir Gilley

Merrick proceeded no further. But Cuff led the fair visitor up towards the couch, where the earl half sat and half reclined, and then withdrew respectfully and in silence.

Agnes could not for some moments look on the person beside whom she now stood, and whose features at a first glance in entering the large room, she was not able to distinguish. A soft-toned voice said some few words—but she heard them not. She trembled with emotion, she felt that the colour left her cheek; and probably the womanly feeling that her beauty would be cruelly impaired by her agitation acted as much towards her recovery, as the rustling sound of the richly-embroidered silk gown, which told her that the wounded man was making an attempt to rise from the couch. With a sudden effort she raised her looks upon his elegant form and fine countenance on which a slight paleness had taken the place of the fever-flush of the last few days. After an instant's examination she saw that all was right!

It was indeed her former friend who now held her hand, and spoke and looked a thousand welcomes. Totally overcome with pleasure and nervous excitement, she burst into tears, and allowed the earl to place her on the couch, against one of the embroidery-covered cushions on which she leaned her face, and sobbed and wept with violent emotion. The ringing of a silver bell close by brought her to herself again; and she saw evident marks of pain on the features of her noble host from his effort in rising up and reaching the bell from the table. To her great relief a female attendant of most respectable mien obeyed the summons; and Essex with delicate gallantry left it to her care to offer what remedies our poor heroine's agitation might require.

A few minutes quite recovered and composed her; and as her eye brightened, and the fine glow of health and animation lighted her countenance up, Essex thought she had grown in beauty with increasing years. Her elegant

though plain and grave-looking apparel, becomingly adapted to her symmetrical form, produced an effect far different to the brown cloth kirtle and cherry-coloured boddice in which he had seen her during her disguise in Flanders, though even in that she was, he thought, most lovely. His admiration was unbounded as the interview went on. Her ingenuous confidence, her eloquent sketches of her own and her husband's thoughts, feelings, and hopes, her animated congratulations on his own celebrity, and her belief in his power to accomplish almost any thing which might depend on Queen Elizabeth's influence were all put forth in rapid but logical sequence, and Essex was completely carried away in his delighted attention to the now enthusiastic Agnes, for she had found a theme to excite her to the utmost warmth of thought and diction.

He answered her with all the generous frankness which was the distinguishing mark of his character. He forgot the uneasiness of his

wound, the weakness it had produced—every thing but his admiration of the beautiful woman he conversed with, and his sad conviction that her hopes were all false and her arduous journey fruitless. In the mildest, but still in most decided, phrase he convinced her—not abruptly but with delicate gradations of proof—that Queen Elizabeth was for a double reason most hostilely disposed, both towards herself and her husband. She had, as all the world had, heard of the almost miraculously perfect resemblance between Agnes and Mary Stuart; and the vile death-doing* which she had accomplished on our heroine's lovely prototype made the very

* We hesitate to affix the positive epithet *murder* to this deed of blood, the previous legal forms softening in some degree its atrocity. But many a murder has been committed with less revolting circumstances than those which marked the cruel and crafty conduct of Elizabeth throughout. It was not, 'at any rate, *her* shrinkingness from the crime, which prevented the hand of a private assassin from forestalling the stroke of the executioner.—See Davison's Apology, Camden's Annals, and the papers of Sir Amias Paulet.

name of Agnes a sound of horror to her ears. Ghebhard too, in flying in the face of authority and boldly acting on his own convictions and affections, had always been looked on by her with reprobation rather than approval. And she moreover had no sympathy for married women, whom she regarded almost universally with open hatred or smothered envy. All this was now explained by Essex, with due management however of the hateful character of that mistress, to whom he, in common with some of the bravest and wisest men of the whole world, had prostrated in all possible ways the dignity and independence of human nature. He further revealed the fact of his having made repeated efforts, when in the very highest triumph of favouritism, to soften her prejudice, and obtain her assistance for our hero and heroine, but invariably without success, and more than once with great risk to his own influence, and thus Essex explained at once his own fidelity to his vow of friendship and the

apparent inconsistency of his never having made any attempt to renew the acquaintanceship, when circumstances might have warranted the highest expectation of advantage.

All this fell upon poor Agnes with a chill and dreary sense of disappointment; and scarcely could the redeeming conviction of Essex's sincerity bear her up against the shuddering dread with which she reflected that she was in the territory, the power, and the close neighbourhood of the haughty tyrant, so odiously depicted to her even by a friendly representation. Her first feeling was to fly instantly from the country which owned a sway so revolting and humiliating; and just then her eyes involuntarily became fixed on the full-length portrait of this terrible woman (which her youthful idolater had thus almost always in his observation in the most sacred recess of his privacy), a close copy from the celebrated drawing by Isaac Oliver, which represents Elizabeth in the dress she wore at the

thanksgiving in St. Paul's Cathedral, after the defeat of the armada. Represented as she there was, studded with jewels and pearls, with glittering crown on head, bright hair profusely curled and ornamented, sceptre in hand, a face of highly intellectual beauty, and scarcely of middle age, Agnes could not help longing, after all, to see the original of this deception, which the obsequious artist had sent forth to the world, to be multiplied in the now scarcely-to-be-procured print of Crispin de Passe. Our heroine, in the genuine artlessness of her nature, took all those limned lies for fact, and she could not resist the belief that a warm appeal would be yet favourably listened to, by the being whose countenance beamed with such sublime benignity

While this never-to-be-realised hope was eloquently speaking in Agnes's features, on which Essex gazed with a wild mixture of feelings—for so much beauty of mind and person could

not fail strangely and strongly to move a man like him—the gentle warning of a muffled bell within the room told him that the female attendant who had before appeared required speech of him on some urgent occasion, for none other could excuse an intrusion on such a *tête-à-tête* as he was now engaged in. He answered by the sound of his own silver hand-bell; and, with a look of some anxiety, he watched the entrance of the discreet person thus once more summoned. She came in with evident trepidation in her look, but true to her accustomed reserve she never suffered her eyes to reach the female form which was now seated familiarly on the couch beside her lord. Directing her eyes towards him alone with considerable skill of concentration, she informed him that “Master Henry Cuff needed an instant admission to his noble presence, on matter of imminent haste.”

“Fore God! it must be such, and in earnest too, or Master Cuff’s head will be found

too heavy, for all its wit, to rest steadily on his shoulders. Let the fellow come in—with your good leave most lovely countess—(Agnes bowed assent) that is, if a moment's thought sufficeth to assure him that he breaks not on me thus with some unworthy rumour or message of no account."

"My lord, it concerneth the queen's majesty," said the woman, with a significant shake of the head which spoke much meaning.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Essex, with such thrill of heart-sinkingness as a schoolboy suffers at the approach of his pedagogue tyrant.

"Come in, good Henry! quick man, quick!" and in an instant the secretary was in the presence of his lord.

"Speak out, Cuff!" continued he, in apparent forgetfulness of his fair visitor by his side. "What wills her gracious highness of me? Does one from Whitehall wait? Hast thou no missive from my great mistress's hand? What does the queen require?"

“In God’s sooth, my noble lord, I know not, but your lordship will ere long have proof of it by the evidence of your own ears—the queen is at this moment landing from the barge-royal at the garden-gate stair, to take your lordship graciously by surprise.”

This was said with a habitual sneer, which the astounded Essex had not time to notice.

“God’s pity! can this be true!” exclaimed he, and rising abruptly and seizing his secretary’s arm, he hurried, unmindful of his hurt, towards a window commanding a full view of the gardens and river. From that position he was indeed enabled to judge of the fact, that Elizabeth approached in person to pay him a condescending visit of inquiry, and as the sun, now sloping westward, shone full upon the scene, he saw her proud figure ascending the steps which Agnes had a few hours previously mounted, leaning on the arm of his arch-enemy Robert Cecil the secretary, by whose presence on this occasion she meant to temper the pride which

she calculated on its exciting in her impetuous kinsman and favourite. Sir John Fortescue, master of the wardrobe, the queen's guide and assistant in the study of Greek and Latin, with a few other gentlemen of her household, and three or four ladies closest in attendance on her person, formed the whole party which accompanied her on this impromptu visit, except a small detachment of the palace-guard which followed close, in another boat, the track of the royal barge.

Essex saw the queen step firmly, and with her wonted air of pride, up the steps and on the platform which overlooked the river. He seemed fascinated by the sight of the woman who held him in such slavish thralldom, and appeared to have forgotten all else in the world. Elizabeth was then closing fast towards sixty years of age. Her erect tall stature was unimpaired by time, and its rigid character was well supported by the harsh style of female dress then in fashion. But with this exception

she bore all the marks of age on her person. Her faded complexion and sunken cheeks, decaying teeth and shrivelled skin, spoke a tale, and a moral, too obvious not to be clearly read by any one save herself. The red hair, which former flatteries had transmuted into "golden locks" was now changed by the metallic touch of time into iron-gray; and all the aid of studied stomacher and thick-flounced frill could not conceal the fact of her bosom's symmetry having wholly disappeared. Like all those faded beauties who strive to dazzle when they can no longer delight, this old coquette had great reliance on velvets, golden fringe, and precious stones; and on this occasion she was as usual profusely decked with those adornments. Her attendant ladies were richly dressed, but far eclipsed by her magnificent display.

The bewildered household had all rushed out into the gardens on the announcement of the queen's near approach; but until the barge

actually stopped at the stairs no one could believe that she meant to come in this unexpected way, to throw all Essex House—including its noble owner—into confusion. But the pleasure of creating embarrassment and annoyance to her dearest friends was among the peculiar enjoyments of this “mild blossome of all graciousnesse.” The consequent bustle was at once painful and ludicrous. The serving-men were seen running in every direction in search of their new doublets and best-badged cloaks; the household halberdiers donned in all haste and imperfectly enough, their various accoutrements; the band of cornets and sackbutts kept for state occasions hurried along towards the scene of action, some with instruments some without, and few with a sufficient portion of breath in their lungs to blow even the discordant blast of welcome which hailed her highness as she gained the platform. There the important Sir Gilley Merrick, with his straggling and bare-headed band of grooms and varlets,

the old lodge-keeper and the two gate-porters, were all duly prostrate, in the servile custom of the times, while the virgin queen passed by them as so many dogs, without deigning a word or look in return to their base homage.

The delighted eyes of Essex took in the whole scene, but was evidently absorbed by the one great object of attraction, till Cuff, his cunning secretary (in the true meaning of the word, for he knew his lord's most privy thoughts) asked him in a sly under-tone "if he meant to present the strange lady to her highness in that private room or in the presence-hall?"

Roused by this hint to a recollection of his situation, the earl started round, and more deadly pale than when his recent wound had bled most freely he stammered out to Agnes some explanation of the absolute necessity of her being conceal'd during the queen's visit. Agnes, who had comprehended the whole affair, and who saw Essex's terrors in the

workings of his countenance, was as anxious as he was to be hid for ever from the sight of Elizabeth, whose rumoured approach had quickly put to flight the passing vision raised by the examination of her portrait. She was ready to accede to any proposition for immediate escape, and she tremblingly expressed this to her equally frightened host. Cuff was about to lead her from the room, when a loud bustle was heard in the anti-chamber, and the galleries beyond, occasioned by the breathless steward and sundry of the domestics approaching by the by-ways of the mansion, to prepare their lord and have some little show of order as the august visitor made her advance by the great stair and the great gallery. Thus beset, Essex had too much delicacy to expose Agnes to the disgraceful measure of a furtive removal in the sight of the very varlets of his household, who would of course attach disgrace to her visit and consequently to her character. The dilemma was serious. The time for de-

liberation short. The discovery of any female visitor—but particularly of one so sure to excite the queen's most hateful passions—might have brought down a shower of vengeance on the head of her distinguished slave.—What was to be done?

“The book closet my lord—the lady will surely consent to take refuge there?” suggested the wily secretary.

“Oh, yes! any where,” said Agnes, “to save me from the sight of this terrible queen of your's, and you, my lord, from any risk of blame on my account.”

In a moment more, our heroine, palpitating, faint, and as pale as death, was safely ensconced in a corner of the earl's private library, a small but elegant room, opening out of the withdrawing-room on one side of the chimney-place; his sleeping apartment, of not much larger dimensions being at the other side. Scarcely had Agnes disappeared, and Essex taken his place on his couch again, when the doors were opened

with great solemnity by Sir Gilley Merrick, the master of the wardrobe advanced announcing the sovereign's approach, and close following came Elizabeth herself, walking alone and followed by her maids of honour, Cecil, and the rest. Essex rose from the couch though with pain and difficulty, advanced towards the door, and threw himself on his knees before the queen. She stooped and bade him rise, gazed on him with an expression of fondness, and holding both his hands, while he still impressed his kisses upon her's, she exclaimed,

“And all this great suffering, this great risk, all for the love of us ! Ah, my brave young kinsman thou hast tried thy sovereign's love too keenly. Yet all is now forgiven—but not forgotten ! Essex thou art ill—there is no colour in thy cheeks. Where is thy physician ? In good sooth I thought not to find thee thus.”

Essex replied, with truth but not with candour, that “it was the overcoming emotion

of her majesty's sudden approach that somewhat affected his weak state."

"Well, we must not wait too long nor risk thy relapse from over-feeling," said the queen ; her vanity which had led her to believe that Essex had fought his duel solely from his admiration of her person, taking it now for granted that it was a paroxysm of love on seeing her so abruptly which caused his emotion. She only mistook the cause, not the effect. A slavish dread of her power, a paramount notion of her divinity of right, and habitual abasement before "God's anointed" composed the elements of what Elizabeth's weakness fancied to be a personal passion ; and created a real and deep sentiment of idolatry for the sovereign, which happily can find no place in the breasts of free-born men. The queen took her seat on the couch, and insisted on Essex's reposing on one of the high cushions at her feet. And thus placed, the by-standers looking on with profound respect,

she proceeded with anxious inquiries after his wound, and with a tedious lecture on the duty of men towards their sovereigns, "to whom they owed their state and service, lives and limbs, and from whose gracious breath alone they had a right to take warrant for any risk or peril," with much more of the same impressive absurdity, to prove the high prerogative of the prince and the lowly pretensions of the subject.

"And now my good lord," said she rising (after having partaken some slight refreshment, a manchet and a glass of Malvoisie, a rare indulgence, as she seldom drank wine) "we must end our visit, nor risk your health too much by the stretch of your regard to do us honour. Your visible agitation is a grateful proof of true duty; and well it pleaseth us to see—though truth to say we owe no thanks on flattery's score to the deep daubing of Master Oliver's copyist—to see that our image

ornaments your private room. We take it, good Essex, as no small proof of love."

"My gracious mistress, to whom I owe all I have on earth, it is but fitting that your divine person alone should fill my eyes, as it doth fill my heart," replied the noble flatterer. Elizabeth held out her hand once more to receive his ardent kisses, whereat the superannuated spinster waxed still more tender than before. Essex, though highly elated by the triumph which her evident affection during this visit afforded him over Cecil, in whose presence it was thus displayed, felt no small relief, at the near prospect of being freed from the risk which this perilous visit had promised at its opening.

"And so my kind young kinsman," resumed the queen, "we may now fairly say that we know Essex House to the core, as we know its noble master. And it is but just to praise where all is so well ordered. The state apartments in which we have erewhile been received

with much and honourable service, are in a good taste of splendour, but this private suite of rooms is to our liking still more graceful, and we must see if all the rest are in keeping with this one. What is there here beyond?"

"This door madam, opens on my sleeping chamber, where if a wooden truck were placed instead of a down bed, it were too good for your majesty's poor servant did not his dreams run nightly on your too great bounty."

"Ah, flatterer!" said the queen, smiling and tapping her favourite with a diamond-studded fan. "But we will not enter there; for we would not leave an impress of our person on the fancy to break your slumbers altogether, now in your great need of restoring nights and quiet days. And what is here?"

"That—that may it please your majesty, is nought but a poor small book-closet—a—"

"Ha! that privy chamber of the mind I must examine I shall see there your studies,

my young sir Your favourite authors—your secret taste in reading! 'Tis not in gaudy galleries meant for public show that men keep the books they feed on. Open yon door, Sir John! you are my guide in study, and shall judge of the earl's good taste. I warrant we shall find fair store of amorous tales or loving ditties on these secret shelves."

As the obedient master of the wardrobe laid his hand on the lock, Essex sprang from his couch, and interposed between the queen and the door.

"I pray you, my most gracious mistress" said he, in great agitation, "ask not to enter there—it is not in seemly state to receive your highness—the books are scattered—loose papers are on the floor—the air is mouldy—it is but an uncouth lumber room—"

"Why, my Lord of Essex, what does this mean?" asked the queen sternly. "Are you distraught, to change colour thus like a guilty girl because your books are out of place? A

mouldy lumber-room, forsooth, close to this richly decked saloon! I tell you, my lord, if the pest raged within I'll enter. What! is there a mystery of alchymy or magic there within? Does it touch our sacred person? Have you some unfledged treason hatching that you would keep pent up till it is ready to destroy us? Answer I say, and truly if you would stand well and firmly in this world, my Lord Essex!"

"My more than sovereign, my very being's arbiter," cried the earl falling on his knees and catching her robe, "those are cruel words, the offspring of most harsh thoughts, towards one who lives but in your service and your favour."

"How durst you, then, oppose my will?" asked the angry despot, her passion rising higher at every moment.

"I oppose not, my mistress,—but on my heart's knees I beg, for your own sake, rather than for mine, that you persist not to enter there."

“Not enter ! By God’s passion ! but I will though Essex House crumble to its foundation and bury me in its ruins. Come, gentlemen, and stand by your queen against this bold earl’s presumption. Follow me all into the secret den !”

Essex seeing opposition vain, rose from his knees and stood with his hands clasped together, throwing a look on Cuff who stood in mute expectation of the issue of the scene. Cecil, whose keen eyes were fixed alternately on Essex and his secretary, now stepped forward close to the queen, and before she could push open the mysterious door he implored her to pause, saying that he thought he observed symptoms which justified a strong suspicion of some really dangerous combination within the closet.

“Then, if there be danger it is fit that I should confront it first,” said the queen, well satisfied all the while that she ran no risk of personal harm from any machination of her

devoted favourite, "stand back till I am within then let who loves me follow me !"

With these words she forcibly threw open the closet door ; but she had not advanced two steps when she uttered a piercing shriek, and with a succession of appalling cries she fell forwards on the floor, burying her face in her hands.

The whole company male and female rushed in, and discovered Agnes, standing in an attitude of extreme terror, her pale countenance still more ghastly from the dead light reflected on it from the blue taffeta window-curtain, on which the setting sun threw its last faint beams. Well might any one who in that superstitious age had the blood of a fellow-creature on their head have taken our hapless heroine for a supernatural visitant of earth. Elizabeth had no doubt but that the ghost of Mary Stuart stood before her. She had never seen her unfortunate rival ; but her beautiful features were too deeply graven in her mind, from the time when

she used in affected friendship to kiss her picture * until those latter days, when, conscience-stricken, she saw her in every shadow of tortured fancy, bleeding beneath the axe.

The present weakness was not, however, lasting. The powerful mind of Elizabeth received, but could not long retain, a shock of terror. She suffered herself to be raised from the floor; and her incoherent expressions betraying her alarmed imaginings, Cecil, Fortescue, and the others took the best means of dispelling the illusion by showing her the living loveliness which had caused her fright. She gazed on fiercely, and even laid hold of and rudely shook, our now indignant heroine, to convince herself, that any being of flesh and blood could so resemble, her former victim whose spirit was in the skies. Shame and rage, at the weakness she had exposed to so many observers, next possessed her almost to phrenzy. She turned its whole torrent upon Essex, who

* See Sir James Melvil's Memoirs.

was again on his knees before her striving to appease her fury.

“ So, base and wicked recreant, you would play a trick upon your mistress ?” cried she, as she strided through the chamber, with livid looks, her gray hair disordered, and her whole air showing a sybil’s fury without her inspiration—“ So ; you would sport with my tender fancy and conspire with a loose wanton to work on my woman’s sorrow for my poor sister that is gone ! Out on you Essex, for a tainted and a loathed traitor ! It was unmanly as well as traitorous—but, by God’s Son ! thou shall rue deeply and pay dearly for this frolic, with this vile masquer hired for the base occasion !”

It was in vain that Essex pleaded his efforts to prevent her entering the closet, and his agitation lest the stranger lady might meet her majesty’s view ; or that Cecil implored her “ to maintain her dignity—whatever might be thought of the earl’s conduct.” She would not be pacified. On Agnes she heaped un-

bounded opprobrium ; and at length our heroine, utterly disgusted, but roused to indignation, replied to her question as to who and what she was,

“ I am, madam, a countess in my own right, of a line as noble and more ancient than the Tudors. I was by virtue of my husband's title a sovereign princess, till the abandonment of false friends and the cowardly standing off of selfish princes lost us our state and dignity. My name is Agnes de Mansfeldt—my husband's I need not now tell to the Queen of England.”

Elizabeth, struck by the proud demeanour of the beautiful woman before her, could not withhold her admiration—but she gave it no expression. She, on the contrary, loaded her with sarcasm ; and gave Ghebbard Truchses a full measure of abuse, as an apostate bishop whose rebellious example had worked nought but mischief, and whose misconduct to the church he had forsaken brought nothing but

disgrace to that he had adopted. Agnes retorted with calm dignity every new burst of vituperation, by a plain statement of the events which brought her to England ; till the crowned virago, worn out by her own violence, and quite satisfied of the truth of all she heard from our heroine, at length retired from the scene, refusing to listen to any explanation on the part of Essex, and giving most peremptory orders to Sir John Fortescue that Agnes was to be without one hour's delay removed on board the first ship sailing from the river for any of the Dutch ports ; and so put far beyond the chance of any further meeting with Elizabeth herself, and out of the reach of any renewed visit to Essex, which might again rouse her despotic jealousy. She would not even admit of the courtesy of a leave-taking on his part with his outraged visitor. And all this self-decreed disgrace to England and its queen was executed to the letter, but with decorous regret by the learned and virtuous functionary thus

brutally deputed to the ungracious office. A vessel sailing by that very tide was immediately engaged for this purpose; and a purse of a thousand crowns was placed in the skipper's hands—by Elizabeth's orders—for Agnes's use. This she indignantly refused to touch; and she turned her back for ever on the country in which she had passed but a dozen hours of most chequered and perturbed feelings, her mind filled with this new and frightful specimen of womankind, one too often held up by servile pens as a model, but whom it is more just to point out as a warning, to any future princess whose high destinies may call her to preside over the moral feelings and the feminine virtues of this great country. Essex found speedy means, by working on the cupidity and vanity of his mistress, to regain his slippery footing in her favour; and ten years more sufficed to bring to a close the drama of his brief career, and to give the crowning proof of the bold blood-thirstiness, which was but one of the

many odious qualities that disgraced (infinitely more than the bright ones dignified) the character of Elizabeth of England.

* * * * *

The scene now shifts once more ; and presents us Ghebhard and Agnes, (sometime after this English episode) fixed in the city of Strasburg, for life and death. He, by means of his German friends, at length succeeded in obtaining the modest post of canon to the choir of that town ; thus ending life in the very station in which his manhood was first employed, having passed through gradations of greatness and of ruin to which few men are destined. Ghebhard continued in the protestant faith, which he had adopted from conviction and practised with purity ; believing it to be the form best adapted to promote the moral and political welfare of mankind, but tolerating in all his fellow-christians the right of worshipping God in the mode which their consciences approved, and maintaining that

no man should withhold from others the same unbounded freedom of opinion which he claims for himself. Of Agnes we shall only say she was, and remained as ever, her husband's second self, and we may emphatically add his better-half !

The annals of the Mansfeldt family tell us that Ernest, Agnes's elder brother, after having served in a distinguished manner the King of Denmark and the Emperor Mathias, and being employed by both in "many weighty embassies" was elected *rector magnificus* of the University of Jena, where he held one most famous oration ; and that he had a principal hand in the celebrated Witzensteinishen or Lathringischen contest, in the year 1604, after which epoch history tells nothing more of him. His brother Christopher, under the tender cultivation of his wife Emma Von Kriechlingen, so completely threw off his outward and early character of impetuous and hair-brained vivacity as to be designated in

the chronicle by the *soubriquet* of “the dove,” and he left after him three sons and a daughter to hand down his own and his wife’s virtues to posterity.

Respecting the minor characters of our tale we cannot be as minute with the same certainty of truth. The curious journal of Heinrick Von Sweinishen, discovered about sixteen or seventeen years ago in the library of the Castle of Furstenstein in Silesia (of which country he was a native) and of which we have already availed ourselves, relates that after the failure of his master the Prince of Liegnitz’s speculations in the Rhine country and in Holland, that redoubted adventurer proposed to his faithful finance minister to proceed to England, for no less a purpose than to demand in marriage Elizabeth herself—and in the mean time to borrow or beg from her the sum of fifty thousand crowns! “But my humble character,” says Von Sweinishen, “revolted at his preposterous proposal,

and I made such persuasive remonstrances that his highness seemed to give up that plan, for he never again mentioned it, nor indeed did he speak to me for several days afterwards." We think it a pity that the doubts of the Ritter Heinrick marred this measure, which would, if executed, have no doubt given fresh occasion for some chronicler to paint another sketch of the "sweete floure's" amiable energy.

About the same period as that of Agnes's visit to London, that is to say some time in the year 1590, and about ten years after the earlier scenes of this tale, an eye-witness relates that Jerome Scotus the magician appeared at Prague accompanied by a troop of well armed cavaliers, with many coaches glittering with gold, and that he lived there for some time in much magnificence! The imperial writ for his arrest, issued at the demand of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, it was never found possible to execute, for the same cleverness and presence of mind with which he safely swam the Rhine, on the memor-

able night recorded in these pages, enabled him by a thousand shifts and turns to baffle the pursuits of his indignant enemies, and to appear for many years in various parts of Europe, a mortal meteor boding nothing but evil to his fellow-creatures. "And what," may the curious reader ask, "was the final fate of the arch impostor?" To which we answer "What?" No record of his death exists. And there may even now be those who believe that he still lives, a wanderer in everlasting vileness on the polluted earth. That belief, as a true romance writer, the author of this book must disavow. Scotus no longer lives bodily in this world; but has not his spirit been given in scattered inheritance to the thousands of mean and sordid charlatans, who exist to-day, and who only want an age as credulous and contemporaries as ignorant, to practice the arts and crimes which made Jerome Scotus infamous?

NOTE.

The foregoing story might have been fairly entitled "An Episode of History," for all its main characters and events are strictly historical. It requires, on that account, a few notices of reference to the authorities on which it is founded, to allow the curious reader to judge in what instances advantage has been taken of doubtful circumstances, in favour of some of the personages, or in how far probability has been trusted to when there were no precise facts to build on.

The chief of what relates to Ghebhard and Agnes is contained in Schmidt's History of Germany, in the account of the Archbishopric of Cologne by Süß, in Koeler's biography of Ghebhard, mentioned in a note to the first volume, and also in Ab Isselt *de Bello coloniensi*.

The most detailed account of the transactions between Jerome Scotus and the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg is to be found in the amusing and instructive collection called *Curiositäten Weimar*. But the

magician is specially noticed in every work which treats of Ghebbhard Truchses ever so incidentally; and it was indeed a short passage in Strada (as quaint and bigotted as anything in his history) that first attracted my attention to the story of the reforming archbishop and his arch-betrayer.

The Universal Lexicon abounds in details of the families of Mansfeldt and Waldburg-Truchses. And I ought perhaps, to add, in conclusion, that history has been more severe on both my heroine and her friend Duchess Anne than anything in my volumes would warrant. Some harsh names are used towards both and some startling statements—I must avow it—brought forward to their disfavour, in various Latin and German works. I will not particularly specify those. The ill-natured may find them out if they choose. But I am of the same mind with old Burton, who “could willingly wink at a faire lady’s faults, when not bound by the stricte lawes of history (as assuredly no romance writer is) to tell the rigid truth.”

THE END.

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